

NANCY SPRINGER

TRANSCENDENCE

Jeremy C. Bow Caldwell 302Tewksbury College Tewksbury, NJ 01234 MS. CHAVADON TIER
c/o Copper Lily Publishing
Box 14792
Tucson, AZ 71053-4792

Dear Ms. Tier,

I love your poetry. I love your poetry. I love your poetry. I am writing to tell
you how much I love your poetry. More than I can say. Lines like, "My dreams
would grow hair on a heron
I have douched a dead duck with maraschino
I have danced with Dahmer in my denims from the Gap
I hide an apricot beneath my Calvin Kleins"

Lines like those -- I don't begin to know what they mean yet they make me feel a
sense of awe and transcendence. I keep your book Angels Fly to the Largest
Shopping Mall in the Known Universe under my pillow, and it helps me get through
the times when college sucks. I believe poetry like yours makes a real
difference in the world. I believe it has the power to change things. I know it
keeps me going.

Your bio says you live in Manhattan. I am not that far away and if it would not
interrupt your writing schedule too much I would love to buy you dinner and tell
you in person how much your poetry means to me. I very much hope to hear from
you.

Fervidly yours,
Jeremy Bow

CHAVADON TIER 140 W. 56th St. New York NY 10001 Jeremy Bow
Caldwell 302
Tewksbury College
Tewksbury NJ 01234

Dear Mr. Bow:

Thank you for your letter of unctuous praise. Thank you for not asking me to
read your poetry, answer twenty questions for your literature course, or
recommend your illustrations to my editor. You seem very nice; therefore please
be assured you do not want to meet me, as I am quite nasty.

Sincerely,
Chavadon Tier

Jeremy C. Bow Caldwell 302Tewksbury College Tewksbury, NJ 01234 Chavadon Tier
140 W. 56th St.

New York, NY 10001

Dear Ms. Tier,

I am ecstatic to receive a reply from you. Of course I will never ask you to look at my poetry or my artwork -- I wouldn't dare. What you are doing is so far above my level I can't breathe when you take me up there with you. How can you call yourself nasty? Are you suffering from low self-esteem? Please believe me, only a caring, sensitive person could have written, We are wounded constantly yet on we ride

Side by side

We believe in the lovers' grail

We know we cannot fail to find

the halo we left behind

waiting at the end of the rainbow

Perhaps you are thinking of some of your darker verse? But only one with a deep understanding of human nature could have written, Ontological goodness is a bore

Beauty smiles but the Beast knows the score

which is one of my favorite couplets which I have penned in toilet stalls all over campus, always of course attributing it to you. I will be in New York on the afternoon of the 19th, and will ring your doorbell just in case. Again, may I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the constant gift of your poetry.

Most unctuously yours,

Jeremy Bow

CHAVADON TIER 140 W. 56th St. New York NY 10001

Mr. Jeremy Bow,

Hell no, I do not suffer from low self-esteem. I suffer fools not lightly, is what I suffer. But perhaps I overreact; perhaps I did not make myself clear.

Read my lips: YOU DO NOT WANT TO COME NEAR ME. I AM HIDEOUSLY UGLY. In body and

spirit. Axl Rose is a blooming sweetie compared to me, and Rambo is apple pan dandy with whipped cream and a cherry on top. I am poet, hear me roar, I know who the hell you are. You are a doe-eyed, pimplesque, milky-mouthed sophomore with bitty buttocks and heart thumpies that shake your rickety wee ribs. I feed on babies like you. Be warned.

Sincerely,

Chavadon Tier

Dear Chavadon,

There, that wasn't so bad, was it? Are you sorry you let me in? I'm glad you did, if only so you could see that I am not overly pimplesque or bitty-butted. The heart thumpies you are right about. I am thrilled to have met you, and in contrast to the Tewksbury Thought Police's everlasting political correctness,

your trenchant honesty goes down like wine. I admire what you have done with your life. It must be very difficult having such a serious facial deformity in addition to glandular problems. No wonder you are a recluse. Thank you very, very much for letting me visit you after all.

You claim to be ugly in body and soul. I guess it is sort of a cliché that people who come in unattractive packages should hide good things inside, and I can't blame you for bucking the stereotype, trying to be negative and cynical and old and tired when you are really not much older than I am. But I'm not buying any of it. I am sure there is a wonderful idealistic dreamer somewhere deep inside you, wanting to make things happen, wanting to change the world. I am sure your poetry is more true to the real Charsalon Tier than your crusty mannerisms are.

May I come again? Dinner next time. If you don't want to be seen in a restaurant, we'll send out for Chinese or something.

Very best regards,
Jeremy

Dear Jeremy,

You are wrong, wrong, wrong about me! The "crusty mannerisms" are not packaging; the poetry is. Get this: nastiness = reality, poetry = fairytale, okay? It's all PR, don't you see? I have built myself a palace of poetry, all mirrors and fountains and fancy lighting and special effects, and I myself am the monster who hides "deep inside," to use your youthful excavation imagery. You have penetrated my palace, and the lumpen freak-face you see is what you get. You have found, in its entirety, the misshapen prize in the crackerjack box. Congratulations.

You say you find my honesty refreshing, but you have not heard so much honesty from me yet as spleen. I called you a milk-drinking sophomore, when you are a damned lovely young animal and you know it, don't you? Wide wise hazel eyes, for God's sake. Fawn-golden faun-soft skin over those austere cheekbones. Innocent sensual mouth. Muscle. Shoulders. Sweet yielding smile. Where the hell did you come from? I didn't think they made them like you anymore, old-fashioned beautiful idealistic kids who write letters.

It beats me why physical beauty bears so much weight in the universe anyway, but it does. I see it, and my heart turns over. So be it.

You ask if you can come see me again. Last time I told you not to, and you came anyway. This time I am going to tell you yes, by all means, come see me, and maybe that will keep you away.

Chavadon

Dear Chavadon,

Dinner was excellent. Thank you. I had never experienced home-delivery French

before. It was memorable. You seem to think I am doing you a favor by spending time with you, like I'd be fighting off hoards of panting coeds otherwise. Riiiiight. In case you haven't noticed, dirty guys with tattoos and nose hair are in. Drugheads are in. Sneers are in. I don't have enough "attitude," whatever that means. And as for where I came from, I come from Iowa -- how uncool. Nobody is interested in me.

I wish I had the talent to be a writer, make something of my life that way. Give it meaning. Alchemize art out of pain. I admire what you do so much, yet you seem to think I'm a fool for loving your poetry. You keep telling me to shut up about it, go read Yeats, your stuff is nothing but a plastic flim-flam, it's a sham, a cosmetic illusion you've put between you and the world, it's your labyrinth to hide in. But that's nuts. I can't believe you think your poetry is something separate from you. I can't believe you think it misrepresents you. Your poetry came out of you, it's an emanation of you, it's your soul, don't you see? And it is beautiful. Therefore you are beautiful.

I'll see you next week. Let me pay for dinner this time.

Love,
Jeremy

Dear Jeremy,

God, you signed your letter "love," what do I have to do to make you see I am a big ugly joke? Listen to me for once. My poetry which you so adore is a consummate farce. Here is how I write it: I put buzzwords on squares of scrap paper, throw them all in a margarine tub and pull them out two at a time. Whatever gets paired up, I just splice it together into a line. It's totally random. It doesn't mean a thing, understand? It's a party game.

You think you mean something to me? I can fix that. I can write a poem about you. All I have to do is come up with some Jeremy words, thus:

milk pagan god
hazel eyes Bugle Boys honey
cheekbones wise child
boat shoes shoulders angel

Then I throw them all in the butter cup, mix them up and pour them out and stick them together with syrup. It's no more challenging than those collages kiddies make out of magazine clippings for summer-camp arts&crafts. It means nothing.

If you still want to come next week, let me know and I will cook. You can't afford to feed me. You have no idea how ravenous I can be.

Chavadon

Dear Chavadon,

Whoa, I never knew mere food could be so good! Anybody who can make meringue like that has the soul of an artist, so stop trying to tell me you're a fake. I

don't care what you say about the way you create your poetry; it's the manifestation that counts, and the transcendence is there. You ask where did I come from -- well, where the hell did you come from? You are the most amazing person I have ever met.

I've been thinking about you a lot. Do you have family? Are there people (besides me) who care about you?

Care about you, hell, I need a good dose of your honesty. What I am really trying to say is, are there people who love you? Maybe that's a sophomoric question, maybe the way you keep company with the angels you're above wanting hugs and kisses, but I have to ask because I am kind of obsessed by the idea of love. I guess love is what I want the most in the world, because I haven't had much so far. My family is a mess -- I don't want to bore you with a lot of sob-story detail, I'll just say it's bad, abusive, and I've survived by leaving it behind. (Thank God for scholarships.) So I try not to look back, I look to the future, and what I dream about is finding what I haven't had in the past. You know. A beautiful girl -- no, a beautiful woman who by some miracle wants me, and I fall like crazy, and when we touch the earth moves, and we build a life together, the whole hearts-beating-as-one cliché. And I don't know why I am being so inane and babbling about myself when what I really started to say was, do you have family or are you alone? Because if you are alone, that makes two of us.

What made you start writing poetry? Was it this love thing? When thousands of people love your poems, does that count as thousands of people loving you?

Maybe, seriously, that is what I should do -- learn to write. But I don't exactly want to be famous. I really just want somebody to love me. Do you want the same thing?

See you next week? Please? I swear I'll pay for the food this time.

Love,
Jeremy

Dear Jeremy,

Oh, Jeremy, my beautiful Jeremy, what am I going to do? No. Absolutely not. Do not come here anymore -- the mansion where I live, made of poetry, it is a prison, Jeremy, not a palace. Stay away. Do not think anymore about being a writer, about being alone, about being like me, any of that. Save yourself, run from me. You are young and full of heart and you do not deserve to be devoured by a lonesome loathsome thing. I am hideous, but you are so lovely all the flower-faced girls will adore you once they wake up and see. I swear it. They will all love you. Jeremy gazes with wise hazel eyes
In the morning love comes to him
With alar cheekbones he seeks transcendence
In stone-washed denim love comes to him.
Jeremy waits with his soul unfurled
In Jordache jeans love comes to him

With a sweet mouth he awaits her
On a lazy angel wind she comes to him.

Jeremy stands in the harsh wet grass
In a halo of beauty love comes to him
He watches her shoulders for a sign of wings
In a dress by Lauren love comes to him.
Jeremy blinks into the sunrise
Love comes to him, love comes to him
She kisses him on his innocent lips
In the morning love comes to him.
Love comes to him.
Love comes to him.
In a halo of beauty love comes to him.

There. A poem for you and only you, Jeremy. I will never publish it.

Okay, so I used a few words besides the ones I threatened to. Okay, so maybe I did not pull it out of a margarine tub. Maybe I even mean some of it, awright? Keep it and be happy.

It beats me why you want to hang around me anyway. What the hell is this, beauty and the beast? Thank God I did not give you my unlisted number. Stay away.

Chavadon

Dear Chavadon,

I know you made cranky get-lost noises at me in your last letter, the one with the poem, but I do not for a minute believe any of them. I just want you to know you don't fool me. I would have been there at the usual time except I had to be somewhere else.

It was an amazing poem. I don't know what to say. Thank you.

The strangest thing has been happening. Maybe you gave me confidence or something, but all of a sudden, like the morning after you sent me that "love comes to him" poem, girls started saying hi to me and smiling at me everywhere. Okay, I'll be honest, the reason I was not in the city last week is that I had a date with a girl to go skydiving, of all things. I can't believe I did that, but I loved it, I want to do it again. It's scary, but wonderful, almost like flying.

Talking with you is like that, like flying. See you next week?

Love, Jeremy

Dear Chavadon,

Why have I not heard from you? Are you not feeling well?

I should get in there to check on you, but -- God, what did you put in that poem, anyway? Love potion? Was the ink made of something you could bottle and market and sell for a billion \$\$\$? This is so weird and wonderful, I have not had a spare moment, and now it's all happening, it's all coming together, better than skydiving and even scarier, I am terrified and ecstatic, I go around trembling and babbling and grinning and looking at the sky. I think I am in love. Her name is Temple --isn't that a beautiful name? She is brainy, rude, kind, quirky, brave, sweet, exquisite -- floating auburn hair, and perfect, almost translucent skin, and long legs, and -- oh, she is damn indescribable. I want her clear to my bones, to the marrow of my bones. And she seems to want me the same way. I can't believe it, she actually seems to feel something for me.

I am flying too high to say anything intelligent or even very coherent, so I had better just go. Let me know how you are doing, and I will keep you posted.

Luv, Jeremy

Dear Chavadon,

Temple and I are getting married. Her family has completely accepted me, which is wonderful, almost as wonderful as she is. We have gone to pick out rings. I cannot tell you how happy I am.

Since I have not heard from you in months, I guess you really meant it after all -- you just want me to stay away from you. I won't write you after this, or bother you with a wedding invitation or anything. But I had to let you know I have found what I was looking for, because somehow I can't help feeling I need to thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your poetry; it got me through a hard time. I wish I could send you a package full of the ecstasy I am feeling now. I want that kind of happiness for you.

All good wishes, Jeremy Bow

Dear Jeremy,

I am dictating this letter to a nurse, so it will be short. I have not been in very good health, and am receiving absolutely no visitors.

This is one time Beauty knows the score. Yes, I just want you to stay away, because nobody has ever understood me as you do. Everything you have said about my poetry is true, and that is dangerous. KEEP OUT.

I am publishing a final volume, Transcendence, with the proceeds going to you and Temple. Your goodness was never a bore. I wish you all the happiness in the world.

Love forever,
Chavadon