



Humble

Beginnings...

A poetry chapbook written, arranged,  
and printed by Ryan El-Ouardighi

# HEREIN ARE WRITTEN

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# Author's Note



...Hello there.

I am Ryan El-Ouardighi, the author of the poems in this chapbook. I also shot most of the photographs for it, except where indicated otherwise.

Between 2025 January and March, I tried to write a poem nearly every day. My main goal was to improve my writing skills; now, on 2025 April 20, I can confidently say that I have reached that.

Through these poems, I have tried to capture moments of life, apply my knowledge of different subjects, and catharcise some of my...let's just say *unpleasant* emotions. The outcome? A 52-page collection of my best work: nineteen poems, to be exact, and twenty photographs, including those I did not take and the front and back covers; one of the poems in this book, "In Memory of the Unknown Soldier", was also recognised previously as the Honourable Mention in Grades 7-8 Poetry for the Ferguson Library's 40th Annual Literary Competition.

One final remark: Spend time on this body of work. Use it as a conversation-starter, or to spawn discussion. Allow it to wash over you because, honestly, that's what I wrote it to do. Thank you for reading.

We all have Humble Beginnings.

# “(The Key To) Happiness”

The miser stands on his yacht,

His mind filled with one thought:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

The CEO shoos his assistant away,

Barely having enough time to say:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

The worker grunts and sweats,

Leaving time for his mind to be be-  
set:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

The intern looks at his paycheque  
and sighs,

And, looking for any excuse to  
make, tries:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

The teenager slams his door,

And allows his mind to say once  
more:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

The homeless man lays on the  
ground,

And mutters to himself without a  
sound:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

You, the audience, pore over what  
is left,

And, finding that it ends here, reflect:

“If only I had more, I’d be happy.”

Suffering is universal; nothing can change that.

Not money, or friends, or even getting payback.

The only advice I can give is the following:

“If only you opened your mind, you’d be happy.”



*A lone flower, for you.*



*If you look closely, you might see a tree-hugger.*

# “Tree of Life”

O Tree of Life!

Your branches protect me from harm;  
They understand my strife;  
They are no cause for alarm.

O Tree of Life!

Your flowering buds have no better rival;  
They are unique and hard to find,  
Like a candle in a room of lightbulbs.

O Tree of Life!

You shall never break my heart;  
No matter how cold the winds bite,  
It is not until death shall we part.

O Tree of Life!

You truly are a God-blessed plant;  
From your most exhilarating sights,  
To your fallen branch.

# “Snow”

‘Twas around the end of the year.  
School wound down for winter recess;  
Colder temperatures were here.

That time brought one spectacle that I  
oft remember;  
Beginning on an evening shortly be-  
fore dinner,  
On the Fourteenth of December.

I played in the grass with fellows from  
camp  
When it started to drizzle on us,  
Making our clothes damp.

Eleven minutes’ time was all it took to  
stop the rain,  
But by that point we were inside,  
Gazing out through the windowpane.

It did not come at once, but bit by bit.  
Soon enough, we all would brighten  
up  
When our collective realisation hit.

We grabbed our coats and rushed to  
play,  
And with the snow crunching and  
groaning  
We concluded that it was truly a  
joyous Friday.

We frolicked and played without  
disturbance  
Until our activities were stopped  
By Bully John’s emergence.

He got a handful of snow,  
And started pelting and assaulting  
us;  
We got up and rushed home.

We formed a master plan for re-  
venge;  
To ambush him and hide ourselves  
Behind a big black bench.

Soon after, as he was walking by  
with his friends,  
We jumped up in unison;  
Our great snow assault had no end.

He ran away in fear, vowing for pay-  
back,  
But we were too busy celebrating,  
As we whooped and kicked and  
clapped.

. . .

That brings a swift end to my tale,  
Which I think of each winter season  
When it snows and hails.

I do not wish to wrap up this story with  
a little red bow,  
Though I will write one last line:  
A schoolboy's best weapon of all is  
snow.



*Free, free as the birds can be...*

# “Free”

Some day, you will be free.

Free of sin.

Free of judgment.

Free of the vitriolic spirit which consumes good men.

You will be free.

Free of responsibility.

Free of need.

Free of want.

Some day.

Free of negativity.

Free of poverty.

Free of hunger.

You don't understand.

Free of having to cry.

Free of having to think.

Free of having to have.

Or having, even.

Someday, we'll all be free.

“To be a poet—”

To be a poet,  
you have to make an application  
and sign on the dotted line.

You also have to account for  
equally worthy candidates.



*Applications are best done in-person.*



*Taken by Herman Miller, New York World-Telegram & Sun Collection.*

# “Malcolm”

X.

He was a man who was bold,  
Whose silence could not be  
bought or sold.

X.

The archetype we aspire to be;  
A man of faith  
Who treated his daughters as  
queens.

X.

He acted kindly,  
Wishing people well,  
And never relented  
When the world gave him hell.

May he eternally rest.

“X”

Taken

It was sudden

Our shimmering star, now darkened and hushed

Without you, the Sun doesn't shine as bright

Abandoned in the cold darkness of night,

With nowhere to go and no who to fight,

The most yuo cann do two resist iz right.

You were



*Another young voice silenced by bullets.  
This photograph was published by AP News.*



*Why?*

# “At a Station of the Metro”

I took a breath as I watched you step,  
And, accepting the cold truth, left.

# “St. Market”

I take a walk in the street.

The air is stuffy, the noise overwhelming,  
And the merchants don't skip a beat.

One sells three products for the price of one;  
Another sells nothing and elects to sleep;  
One more looks beaten up and tired of being  
under the sun.

But one in particular catches my eye.  
He wears a white thobe  
And offers only one product to buy.

He sounds Arabian  
With a scent of cologne.  
And lures me in with one question:

“When will you come home?”



*Someday, Maghrib, someday...*

# “La machina-tempo”

NO RECORDS FOUND.

I pushed “OK”  
Just for the machine to say

NO RECORDS FOUND.

It must have been incorrect  
How could the machine not detect  
My future?

NO RECORDS FOUND.

The machine is perfectly calibrated.  
So something must have made it  
Read this way...  
But what exactly?

GUNSHOTS BREAK THROUGH THE CROWD.



“19 juillet”

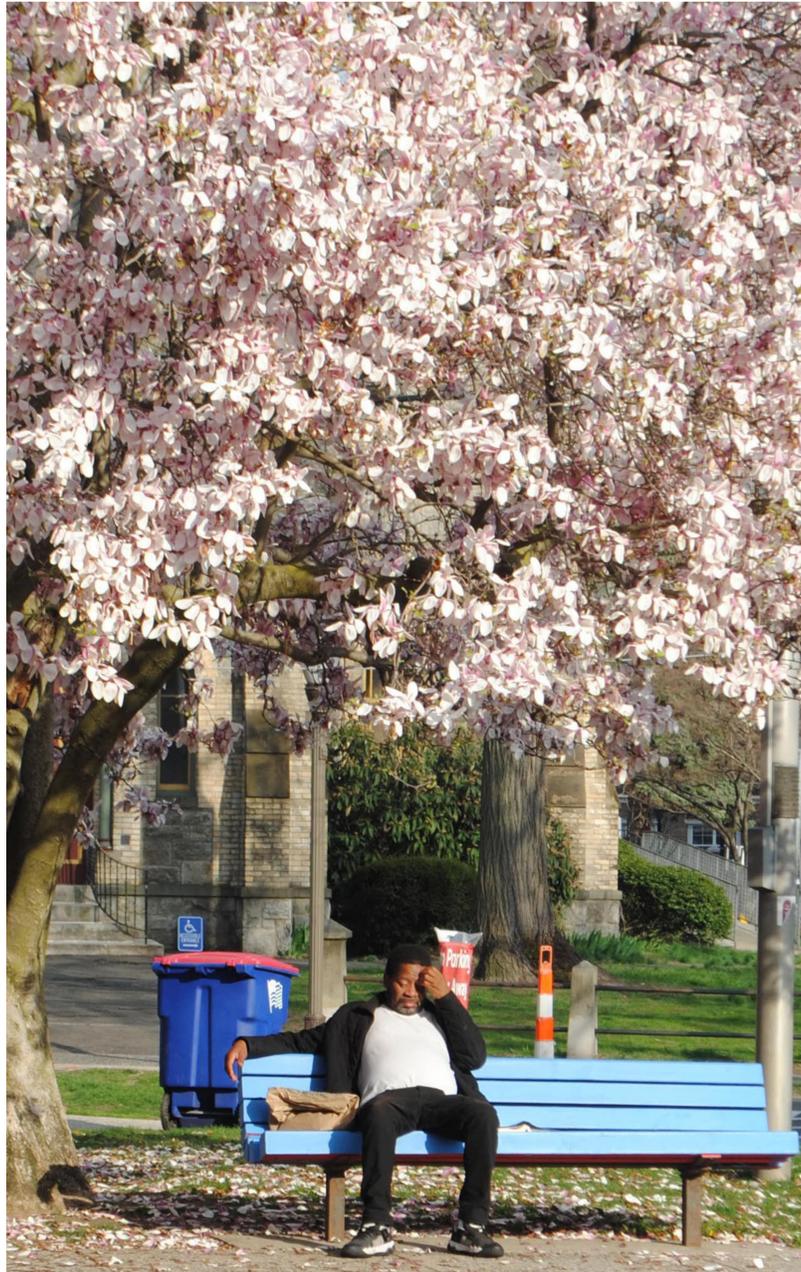
It was about 8pm  
Drinks cold as a dark November  
Blood was on the horizon

look at that sunset  
yea  
a muddy spring eh  
no no no  
what  
its the damn clouds  
well  
theyll pass eventually

But they didn't  
I had to go home



*It really is too bad that the weather turned.*



*How long do you wait before losing hope?*

“18 juillet”

Waiting takes a long time

Especially when you are anxious  
for love

“17 juillet”

But eventually. You get courage  
Misplaced or not  
It's there

I'm the one with the plan  
My #1 biggest fan

HEY THERE LOVE  
HOW U DOIN 2DAY  
LET ME TAKE YA OUT

Y?

.



*So many people  
So many pretty faces*



*Requiescat in pace.*



*Thank you for your service.*

# “In Memory of the Unknown Soldier”

In the fields where poppies and lilacs grow,

Robins rest and songbirds cry.

A tree is the perch of a small black crow,

Cawing by a meadow where a body lies.

He is adorned with decorations and medals,

Some green and blue and black and red.

The yellow of the meadow gives way to meddle,

By a spot where the blood poured from his head.

Combatants never knew he was a pacifist inside,

And would have never enlisted if he had a choice;

It truly was a shame that he was chosen to die,

Bullets silenced one more young voice.

Some would say this is perfectly normal,

And bound to happen in conflict;

Yet I object and deem it horrible,

The way people see the exact opposite.

Yes, we should remember this young man,

And the terrible way he left existence;

Because to kill one is a tragic plan,

Yet a million more is just statistics.

# “Document 002”

Love is transient.

It is the thing that penetrates the soul  
so sharply  
and leaves a lifelong scar.

Love is the thing  
that people give you  
when it is convenient for them  
to do so.

Love is—



*Will he ever believe in love?*



*The following piece was inspired by the painting “My Bunkie”, finished by Charles Schreyvogel in 1899.*

# “untitled-1; or, L.I.F.E.: The Anthology”

## I. Loss

Schuyler couldn't bring  
himself to choose.

But he could not  
afford to lose.

Escaping on the very  
horses he raised,  
He thought they  
parted ways.

But now he fled  
from the officers in terror,  
Seeking to forget all past  
mistakes and errors.

The horses beat  
down on infertile sand,  
Travelling faster than light  
through the unforgiving land.

His partner slipped  
off during the daring chase,  
And surely would have been  
trampled without a trace.

But in that young face Schuyler saw  
himself,  
His younger counterpart  
with courage and an aura of wealth.

His arm sprang out  
and grabbed onto his shoulder,  
And pulled him just in time to not  
get hit by a boulder.

He lifted him back onto their  
horse and said,

“You won't die, not after  
all the pursuits we've led.”

And he lived  
through the battle,  
Though he was  
shaken up, and breathed with a rattle.

## II. Inevitable

And so they rode  
in that fashion, going for a time.  
The hooves of their rides  
turning into a strong and steady chime.

As night drew, they searched  
for every and any respite,  
And started to become  
increasingly more desperate.

It was when they had been  
driven to their wits' end  
That they came across  
a place with ample time to spend.

They laid down their arms and  
collapsed onto a boulder nearby.

Hours later they looked  
up to the sky,  
And saw that day  
would soon turn away.

Schuyler talked  
of what had happened,  
and the other listened keenly,  
When suddenly

WHIZZ!

a bullet flew by a tumbleweed.

They both readied  
their guns to investigate,  
And were met  
with a police brigade.

The shots exchanged were  
innumerable, one after the other.  
It was every man for  
himself, brother against his brother.

His brother-in-arms,  
his one true friend,  
was hit by a stray,  
And passed while  
trying to crawl away.

Schuyler would avenge  
him and finished the battle,  
Making a scene heard from  
San Antonio to Seattle.

He threw down his gun and ran  
to his fallen brother,  
Frantically searching for any  
signs of life, checking one wrist af-  
ter the other.

But he would soon find  
that there was no hope left.

A single tear fell down  
his face that day and landed on the  
sand,  
The loss of his fellow burning  
hotter than a thousand brands.

And so Schuyler pledged to return  
him back to his home, his city,  
of Sacramento, California, where he  
received  
much pity.

### III. Funeral

His funeral was  
four days after,  
And was led by  
the local church's pastor.

That morning Schuyler woke  
from his rest,  
And prepared to  
wish his friend well in the grave's test.

He readied himself  
to attend,  
But was hit with  
anxiety and fear instead.

He was chosen as a speaker,  
And was soon to present what he had written.

*But how can I honour him with my "eulogy"?  
My words amount to that of a child's poetry.  
I should shuffle these papers and cut them in half!*

Despite all of his efforts to  
push the thoughts away,  
His mind could do nothing  
but continue on to stray.

His speech could not be  
good enough to honour his death,  
For he had laid his life  
down with one final breath.

*I should have died as did he that day,  
Gasping and pleading for air next to him.  
Had we both been headed the same way,  
The chances of this ordeal would be slim.*

They filled his thoughts  
as he walked to the funeral home,  
With its intricate design and  
construction of stone.

He met with the pastor,  
organised his writing,  
And walked onto the podium to  
deliver his remarks and end his inner fighting.

## IV. Eulogy

“We gather here today to remember the life of Adam.

He was a loving brother who lived a kind life, hating none.

He may not have travelled down the straightest road,

And he may have forwent prayer to the LORD; but deep down inside he was an innocent soul, free of disdain.

When I first met him in the Oklahoma Territory, I found in him for the first time a noble outlaw.

He wouldn't hurt a spider or a fly if he saw either.

The amount of respect he had for others was astounding.

He saved me from almost certain death only three years ago.

Today is a day of remembrance and mourning for all of

the people fortunate enough to meet him during his life.

Goodbye, Adam. You may not be here with us, but your dear memory is.”

...

Even with his worries, the eulogy was a success.

The audience cried and laughed in response to his jests.

It wasn't long after that the ceremony proceeded.

And for Schuyler, there was only one more thing he needed.

He walked to the casket where Adam's body lay. And held back tears while starting to pray.

He hugged his brother, holding him to his chest. Before bidding him farewell from this corporeal world, and laying him to rest.

## Epilogue

The funeral was  
short and sweet,  
Keeping a steady  
time and beat.

They say his spirit still rings  
every Sunday from the bell hollows;  
And on his faded tombstone  
somewhere you may find what follows:

*Adam Hoffnungratz,  
(18\_\_ - 18\_\_.)  
A blessed man indeed,  
Unburdened by greed.  
As an outlaw,  
He only saw,  
Selflessness and peace.*

R. J. El-Ouardighi, Greenwich, C.T., 2025 February 21, 14:01.



“Document 003”

I am never by myself;  
but always alone.



*No comment.*



*HELP ME*

# “untitled-3 (Help)”

Help me.

I am inside these pages you hold.

I beseech you for release;

I am more than cheap words to be sold.

Help me.

Release me from this book.

You are the only one who can.

Nobody else has even cared to look.

Help me.

There is not much more time.

I am sick of being imprisoned;

I am sick of having to speak in rhyme.

Help me.

My soul is fading with these works.

It has been weakened and jaundiced;

I search for and seek respite, broken and hurt.

Help me.

This is urgent, I beg!

Don't let me wither in these pages;

Don't let this poem end!

Ryan Jacob  
El-Quaradghi.





