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### Spoiler Alert, June Notebook, and Political Poem

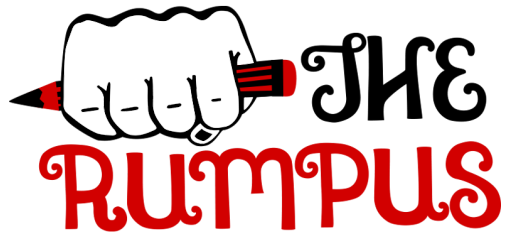
Dean Rader

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Fight like a motherfucker.



# Rumpus Original Poetry: Three Poems by Dean Rader

By [Dean Rader](#)

August 24th, 2017

## Spoiler Alert

This poem opens with clouds sliding off the edge of the sky. It is dusk. The camera has been sped up to make everything

appear to be in a hurry. And now night. What looks like ghosts trail along overhead as though on a conveyor into nothingness.

In this stanza, the poem will draw comparisons between an axe and a decree from a far off country, a document

or declaration, perhaps of war  
or genocide but the poem  
will have strong misgivings  
about the presence of

genocide in the poem, especially  
as the first word of a stanza.  
Soon, but not yet, the poem  
shall shift to a different scene

where two boys practice shooting  
at two other boys they believe  
to be their rivals. Are they playing a  
video game? Are they on a

paintball course? Are they  
in a suburb in America? We don't  
know but the camera has now  
moved to a bed where a man

and a woman do what exactly?  
What the reader wants and what  
the poem needs might be in this  
scene radically different. The

point is that something is  
happening in the bedroom on  
that bed. It is dusk again.  
He lifts a hand, and now we know

## **June Notebook**

\_\_\_\_\_ *for Cassie Duggan*

Because the fan could not turn the summer air to ochre, the feathers  
found their way to the window.

The old grammar was always just a placeholder for new resentments.

You planted rows of gardenias in the billiard room (noticed) (at last),  
even though the house was clearly in flames.

Our lives are a diorama of what is yet to be,  
a slingshot over the commute.

This revelation is a caterpillar on a tree.

If paradox is your home, look out the window to see simplicity  
from the scope of the sniper.

We spend so much of our lives in the visible.

Returned letters are on the prowl;  
the gold of the mind buried next to the pickaxe.

Open your mailbox to find the shinbone your disquiet dug up from the yard.

Let's admit it: we have all been vacillating between hindrance and drawback,  
but that doesn't mean our languor is our own.

Perhaps this is why we have become addicted to a drug called recovery.

This poem is slowly transforming into a wounded zebra  
about to be set upon by a pack of lions.

The moon shining on your bright face and you shining back.

The road is closed, but at the end one of two things waits:  
1) an aging clown; 2) cancer.

Self, you are a lot like a combination lock on a small island.

The moths come in seasons of drowsiness;  
the flood arrives with a whirring of wings.

Nature, you are a suitcase too heavy to carry;  
you may get left behind.

Sometimes I am a person who says yes to everything, even a toothache.

History has lectured to us about both plot and structure;  
O to be frenulomed to our words.

### **Political Poem**

\_\_\_\_\_ *after W. S. Merwin*

One day  
when the war

is over  
something will

rise to bear  
the new weight

we have been  
asked to carry

up the path  
to that place

we have come  
to think of as

*this life*. In a  
small field

a young  
girl raises

a shovel and  
sets it down.

She imagines  
a small bird

lifting into the air  
like some sort

of prayer  
that knows

its way.

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[Dean Rader's debut collection](#) of poems, *Works & Days*, won the 2010 T. S. Eliot Poetry Prize and *Landscape Portrait Figure Form* (2014) was named by The Barnes & Noble Review as a Best Poetry Book of the year. He was won numerous awards for his writing, including the 2016 Common Good Books Prize, judged by Garrison Keillor, and the 2015 George Bogin Award from the Poetry Society of America, judged by Stephen Burt. He writes and reviews regularly for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Kenyon Review*, *Ploughshares*, and The Huffington Post. Two new collections of poetry appeared in 2017: A book of collaborative sonnets written with Simone Muench, entitled *Suture* (Black Lawrence Press), and *Self-Portrait as Wikipedia Entry* (Copper Canyon), about which, *Publishers Weekly* writes “few poets capture the contradictions of our national life with as much sensitivity or keenness.” [More from this author →](#)

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