

some square poems

by ben crowder

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2026

published january 2026

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ai was not used in making this book

preface

For this collection I set myself the constraint that each poem had to be square, where the number of syllables per line matches the number of lines. I had fun with it and hope you enjoy at least one of the poems herein.

Ben Crowder
January 2026

poems

¹ Rooms full
of books

² I've missed the bus
ev'ry day since
they shut it down
because of ghosts

³ He swats a
fly with his
messed-up mind

4 **One-way
friendship**

5 **Baby in
a small bag
on the porch**

6 **The bridge fallen
drapes the river
in shards and screams
and cold bodies**

7 **Love in
her smile**

8 Pacing
the room

9 Once I heard of
a family
of badgers dressed
in tuxedoes

10 You can't die
until you've
paid your dues

11 Fast love,
short life

12 The drowned girl sits up
in her soaked casket
and joins the bereaved
in singing a hymn
to friends now fallen

13 Paint my face
and make me
a new man

14 Hear my
hiccups

15

**Your secrets
can't hurt me
anymore**

16

**A kiss for me,
from a love long
passed, on the old
letter she mailed**

17

**Wobbly
arrows**

18

**Punctuation is
the salt and pepper,
the short-held breath that
seasons the sentence
and makes it taste good**

19

**Do you think
it's time to
let it go?**

20

**Brand new
old king**

21 "Foolish child,"
he said. Then
it ate him.

22 She sits on a
wall, waiting for
her friend to call.
He never does.

23 Lotion
for toads

24 Seasick
sailor

25 The accountant said
nobody would know
but he was wrong and
now they're all in jail
for a long, long time

26 We found her
brewing a
love potion

27 Grass on
your floor

28 Children weep
under the
widow's roof

29 When the alarm
sounded, we woke
to a room full
of blind dragons

30 So much
to read

31 Worn fridge
magnets

32 We're building a house
of learning, a house
of order, a house
of glory, a house
for God to live in

33 Three years gone
and still I
see him there

34 Belt those
sweet tunes

35 Dead cat
prowling

36 The sound of a
new orchestra
tuning all their
old instruments

37 A mountain
of old books
to read through

38 Silent
phone call

39 **Seven small children
in a house far too
large, with too much time,
no adults, and some
ancient spells: mayhem**

40 **Bare legs in
winter when
the cold stings**

41 **Wizard,
weeping**

42 **Mumbled
thank-you**

43 **In the darkness
she can see him
counting his gold.
But not for long!**

44 **That playroom is a
nighttime haunt for the
goblins who used to
live under the ground
here and want it back**

45 **Ice cream
tonight**

46 Make some
more art

47 Our son is a
changeling, strange and
foreign in a
familiar skin

48 Gathering
to read some
classic lit

49 I see
a ghost

50 **Ring, ring,
ring, click**

51 **Two brothers
giggling, an
inside joke**

52 **Can you please send
a stack of books
full of old spells?
For a good cause.**

53 **Give me
your eyes**

54 **Whispers
at night**

55 **I found a handful
of soggy sand at
the bottom of my
purse, where I'd left the
funny little man**

56 **Tiny
notebooks**

57 **Too much
poison**

58 **How many
more must we
lose tonight?**

59 **Curl up on the
couch with a good
book and a mug
of hot choc'late**

60 **Put that
back, please**

61 **They wave,
confused.**

62 Cul-de-sac
barbecue
in summer

63 Her diary
glares on the desk
full of anger,
a bitter tale

64 Can't hear
you now

65 Shipless
dockyard

66 I smell pho
in that bowl.
May I eat?

67 The advisor
to His Highness
is a heartless
traitor, I think.

68 Lying
mirrors

69 God is
here now

70 **Christmas Day
and not a
gift in sight**

71 **I first learned to
cast spells in my
eighth grade home room,
on accident**

72 **Mismatched
socks, whoops**

73 **One life
for yours**

74 Wind whispering
through the patched walls
bespeaking lives
squeezed and spent here

75 Someday we'll
read through all
the good books

76 All the
dead rise

77 Toddler
seeks work

78 **Scattered snowfall
on the sidewalks,
blustery breeze,
your hand in mine**

79 **See the fragile
democracy
buckle and crack
under his weight**

80 **God hears
my cry**

81 **Don't die
softly**

82 **Birthday cake made
fresh yesterday
but forgotten
after the fight**

83 **Play the game
and lose your
family**

84 **Cloudless
night sky**

85 **Small gift:
his heart**

86 They lurk in a
cave on the south
side of the cliff,
stitching flesh wounds

87 Sagging
bookshelves

88 Pitched stairs
lost shoe

89 Wait a second, you've
been gone for how long
and you think you can
come here and propose?
To me? Okay, fine.

90 Anyone
but him, please—
he's the worst

91 Not the
real you

92 Fading
stardust

93 Some people
don't know how
to speak truth

94 We're watching
the empty
hospital

95 Luckless
lizard

96 Please, do
not go

97 **She once told
me that her
mother died**

98 **I live in
the old town
library**

99 **You are
not her**

100 **Potion
for two**

101 **Big bowl of
ice cream on
the table**

102 **Bedtime stories
in another
language, told soft
so slumber comes**

103 **Missing,
six weeks**

104 **Wistful
sunset**

105 **Even if
you come by,
I'm not here**

106 **An unsolved
medical
mystery**

107 **brb
iyk
yk, k?**

108 **Treehouse
naptime**

109

**Remember
when you and
I were friends?**

110

**History
leaves a smear
of past lives**

111

**Do the
hard work**

112

**Magic
cardboard**

113 Let's fly to
Europe and
stay for years

114 After the
earthquake, a
cry of loss

115 One pen,
ten lies

116 Listless
wand'ring

117 **Pizza party
in the back room
for those who saw
what happened there**

118 **See that huge
tornado?
Time's run out.**

119 **Dessert
for lunch**

120 **Truth is
revealed**

121 **They bathed his
feet with their
joyful tears**

122 **Their friendship
lies silent
in the past**

123 **Writing
is work**

124 **Messy
magic**

125 **Strange, tiny
boy at my
back window**

126 **Winter storm
approaching
with malice**

127 **Blank-paged
notebooks**

128 **She smiles
like you**

129 **Resurrect
me when I've
croaked, okay?**

130 **Five year old
dancing round
the front room**

131 **Making
some bread**

132 **Someday we'll
see through the
fog of death**

133 **Flirty
cashier**

134 **An old man, sweeping
the snowdrift, sings her
a ditty he wrote
himself when he was
young, before she died**

135 **Hollow sits
the head on
our new king**

136 **Cup full
of bees**

137

**Sludgy snow
streaked into
the front room**

138

**Later I'll
give you back
your car keys**

139

**Sad song,
sung well**

140

**Toddler
for sale**