



LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

From the fool to the world : poetry. 2012

Stone, Alison

Madison, Wisconsin: Parallel Press, 2012

<https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/ZZJYDVJLIVO768X>

Copyright 2012 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved.

For information on re-use see:

<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/Copyright>

The libraries provide public access to a wide range of material, including online exhibits, digitized collections, archival finding aids, our catalog, online articles, and a growing range of materials in many media.

When possible, we provide rights information in catalog records, finding aids, and other metadata that accompanies collections or items. However, it is always the user's obligation to evaluate copyright and rights issues in light of their own use.



From the Fool to the World

Poetry by **Alison Stone**

PARALLEL PRESS POETRY SERIES

A Parallel Press Chapbook

From the Fool to the World

Poetry by
Alison Stone

Parallel Press
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries

Parallel Press
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries
728 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
<http://parallepress.library.wisc.edu>

Copyright © 2012 by the Board of Regents of
the University of Wisconsin System

All rights reserved

ISBN: 978-1-934795-40-8

Poems in this book, some in earlier versions, have appeared in the
following publications:

“The Lovers”, “Justice”, “Judgment”, and “The Tower” in *1st of the Year*

“Temperance” in *Barrow Street*

“The Wheel of Fortune” and “The World” in *Center*

“The Sun” in *Many Mountains Moving*

“The Emperor” in *Star*Line*

To my father

Contents

0. The Fool	8
I. The Magician	9
II. The High Priestess	10
III. The Empress	11
IV. The Emperor	12
V. The High Priest	13
VI. The Lovers	14
VII. The Chariot	15
VIII. Strength	16
IX. The Hermit	17
X. The Wheel of Fortune	18
XI. Justice	19
XII. The Hanged Man	20
XIII. Death	21
XIV. Temperance	22
XV. The Devil	23
XVI. The Tower	24
XVII. The Star	25
XVIII. The Moon	26
XIX. The Sun	27
XX. Judgment	28
XXI. The World	29

0. The Fool

Say *yes*. Don't look.
Leap!

Every journey starts
with the eager dog of the heart.

Zero is an egg
that holds all numbers.

If you won't dance,
then who's the fool?

Inside my cloth bag—apple,
table, stallion, sky.

Come! The rich
cliff tempts like wine.

I. The Magician

No rabbit up my sleeve, no hidden door.
As above, so below—the sun's
red laughter, the roses'
soft red mouths.

Sure I juggle planets, twist
balloons into a zoo; but the real
work is to hold two wands—
one raised, the other
pointed to the ground—
to let power flow through you like song.

Trying to hoard God, lovers
swoon and seekers speak
in tongues. Mere party tricks!
Common as a deck of marked cards. Any amateur
can saw a box in half, his blond assistant
safely scrunched to one side,
can draw applause
escaping from fake locks.

The true magician
summons heaven down to earth,
where it can blossom.

II. The High Priestess

Red of pomegranate, red of blood.
Hollow men, does my blood
scare you? And you, timid ladies
who won't claim my name?

There are lands you enter
after midnight, pages you
can't read with open eyes.

Cut like a foreskin from history,
I know the mind
is just a small thing, tight
as the throat of the child whose father gloats,
Eve from Adam's rib! waving
the Bible in triumph.
She is wan and bookless. Her bones
are not her own.

III. The Empress

Languid sun
honeys my skin;
toes scrunch
lush grass. Fingering
the pearls and planets draped
around my neck, I recline
near the river
and watch babies suckle,
children tumble in the grain.
While lovers lope
beneath branches that sag
from the weight of dark fruit,
birds shove beaks
into the sweetness.

You are all my children.
Your body knows
to trust rough bark, to listen
to ears of corn.
Do not lament
to the sky, seeking
distant heaven. This world
you drag your feet upon
is paradise.

IV. The Emperor

Every life needs edges.
I protect you from the meadow's
wanton splendor,
passion running amok.

Lean against my law
the way a child lets go
into a father's strong arms. Pruned
and tethered vines bear stronger fruit.

Defy me
if the sobbing
of jailed innocents
grows louder than rain.

Kill me
when the names
for animals and sky
replace the animals and sky.

V. The High Priest

*My flock,
talking to God is effortless.
“Please” and “help”
fall from our lips
as easily as loose rock
drops from the face of a cliff.
Listening is harder work.
Garbled to the novice, God’s voice
needs translation. Without a teacher,
His verbs won’t unlock.*

Used to be
they learned Latin,
used to be they kept
their doubts to themselves. Now
even the faithful study Darwin,
even the devoted ask
where the collection money
goes. My own doubt
turns to pebbles in my mouth.
I confess—I envy monks
who set themselves on fire.
Such spectacular prayer!
In dreams, humble sparrows fly
with eagle wings. Every mumbling
servant longs to sing.

VI. The Lovers

Coiled around this tree for centuries, I've seen
the Bible's myth of sin and fig leaves twist

an older tale of sacred fruit whose juice
unlocks the door to paradise.

Truth is, a man lives in his parents' dreams
until lust lets him go; an angel

only hovers when a woman
holy with desire grabs her lover's hand.

Don't believe the story of a cherub with a crossbow
binding fools in blind devotion.

Love is always a choice.

VII. The Chariot

I win! I have harnessed
fear and passion,
antique beasts
whose riddles can't kill me.

Now waves are dragged
by the full moon of my heart.
The stars spell out my name.

My one eye misses nothing.
I am a language without adjectives, a diamond
in the setting of itself.

I want wolves to lick my feet. I want
swine to turn to princes when I speak.
I want my sweat to smell like nectar.
I want doubt to melt in my mouth.

Other beings are tied with string,
jerked by the breeze
that is my breath. I am the spider
in the center of the web.

When I cough, mountains fall.
When I am angry, the old die in their beds.
If I tear a fingernail, a child
is born without limbs.

(The tethered sphinxes
paw the ground and stare.)

I can look nowhere
without seeing myself. My giant
jaws chew up the world
until there is no world.

VIII. Strength

The unheard heart
grows fangs and fur.
Fat with need, its hot
breath burning,
this rough beast
roars behind heavy bars.
Will you stay
when I unlock the gate?

*Teach me
your secrets, animal,
the dreams you ate.
Release the worried bones.*

Armed with flowers,
I guide the jaws.

IX. The Hermit

Beard to indicate sagacity,
a firm yet gentle voice—I know
what you're expecting when you call, know you need
permission masked as a command:
Turn from money, love. Ignore
the mortgage. Leave your name.
My costumes change through the ages.
Right now hooded cloaks
are popular, as well as the spectacles
and notepad of a kindly analyst.
The journey is always the same,
and I've guided it so many times, I fantasize
about retiring. Days in the garden,
nights by the fire, small questions only: Coffee
or chamomile? Crossword or book?
But *when the student is ready*, etc.
so here we go. Follow me
into this grove of silver trees
where wild cries cut the dark and memories
hang like bats. The spooked heart
crying, *Turn back now*, the soul
a small white moth drawn by my lantern's beam.

X. The Wheel of Fortune

From my eternal turning, everything
that falls can rise and what goes up
can plummet like a torn balloon.
I am painted with the law of fate.

What falls can rise and what goes up...
An old story, thick with questions.
I am painted with the law.
The breath of this law is concealed in its letters.

History thickens with questions.
The way the moon masks herself as a woman
and the breath of the law is concealed in its letters,
the Grail hides in your kitchen sink.

Old moon masked as a woman,
soul obscured by flesh,
the Grail hides in your kitchen sink.
Wealth passes into winter, war into song.

The soul costumes itself as flesh,
can plummet like a torn balloon.
Wealth passes into winter, war into song.
From my eternal turning, everything.

XI. Justice

I am not blind,
you are blind—

wandering memory's forest, scratched
by branches, cursing the dark

while birds cry in the poplars
and the damp earth reeks. A thick snake

slithers and coils.
Which scares you more,

to believe that life is unfair
or to believe that life is fair?

XII. The Hanged Man

Eyes level with lilies, feet in the clouds—
Every day I dangle, habits
and ambitions fly away
like dust motes from a beaten rug.

Nothing sways me,
not the gray-eyed lady
or the neighbors' gossip, not the stack of mail.
Yes, I'm thirsty, cold, I ache

from so much blood to the brain, also the perching
and pecking of curious birds;
but I hang
tranquil as the lake beneath my hair.

Join me on this tree, head under heels.
Surrender
will transform the rope around your leg
into a lover's hand.

XIII. Death

What will it take to reassure you?
I don't bring oblivion. The old self
needs to be sloughed off like skin.
Think of me as cosmetologist, not fiend.

Why suck the dry breast
of the past?
The mask is not the face.
Even breath is not the soul,
although the body has
no other wings.

Deep Moss shadowing the lids, cheeks
flushed with Pink Impermanence...

You know me when you clean
hairs from your comb,
when you lie down with your lover,
bone to bone.

XIV. Temperance

Of course moderation is a piece of cake
for me; I am an angel.

I have had eternity to master balance,
and besides, it's easy to stay
calm in any storm

when a rainbow arcs perpetually
above my head like a giant umbrella.

I understand you are only human.

Still, why let yourself be bumped from center
by recycled heart hungers or the lust beast.

Throw away your book of rules. Stop boring everyone
with resolutions. Just plant
one foot on land, the other
in the cold school of the sea.

XV. The Devil

There is no heaven, nothing more than this
dull job, poor health, lifeless relationship.
Dance to the music of the fire's hiss.

Leave any time you like—the loose
chains I drape don't bind you. Have a nice trip.
There is no heaven, nothing more than this.

Life burns. Sex is the only balm. Don't miss
any chance to screw, lie, rest, repeat. Clap
your bodies to the music. Fires hiss:

The soul's a pretty fiction. Take the kiss
of your familiar anguish, its warm lap.
There is no heaven, nothing more than this.

Since this base world is all there is, practice
gulping money and awards. Never stop
dancing. Greed's music is the fire's hiss.

I offer you respite from the abyss
of futile wishes. Hope is the real trap.
There is no heaven, nothing more than this.
Dance to the music of the fire's hiss.

XVI. The Tower

Stones of money,
bricks of sex divide you

from the wind, the wild stars.
Trapped inside my walls, you

miss the tocsins.
Pressure's building fast.

Do you think
lightning comes from outside?

Too late now. The bolt
sears me like love.

I'm crumbling.

Which god
will you pray to

as you leap
into a sky alive with fire?

XVII. The Star

Hush.

Lie down by the still pool,
the sharp hills blurred to shadow.

Why do you think
I'm featured in so many lullabies?

If light were music,
mine would be the tune
your mother crooned as you,
the day's bumps and abandonments
erased, sank milk-drunk into sleep.

XVIII. The Moon

The lines of your features blur in my light.
Oceans foam. Waves reach to gather my light.

Always voluptuous, I sometimes hide
all but one small sliver of my light.

Don't say that I reflect the sun; I transform
his garish rays to silver. My light

turns to jewels bared teeth of dog and wolf, their howls
mingling. Shadows devour the polite

garden. Souls of the mad float up to seek me.
Frenzied, they circle forever in flight.

The swing roped to the oak tree sways, a red
ball drops near Mother, young, her hair of light.

From the lake's belly, a giant crayfish
rises, crawls from water toward light.

Monsters unmask when you surrender to me.
Stone breathes and shimmers. Pure delight.

XIX. The Sun

In his mother's womb, the Buddha
blazed; her belly shone
like a translucent shade over a bulb.

Boulders, groundhogs, grass, your surly neighbor—
my light flares from everything.
With all shining, how can you not celebrate?

Let me melt
your stubborn sorrow, leave you
innocent and lovely as an animal.

XX. Judgment

*When you come to a fork in the road,
take it.*

—Yogi Berra

One path's cushioned with leaves
whose shapes you traced
in childhood with crayon.

Take the other.

I understand
you don't feel ready.

No one ever feels ready
but you are choiceless as a chick
inside a cracking egg.
Can't you feel yourself
unfolding toward the shards of light?

XXI. The World

Once the world disguised itself
as a dark cave, every creature
fenced by skin and fear.

Now
illusions shatter
like dropped cups.

Zero is an egg that holds all numbers.
The eager dog of the heart
leaps in its fur of light.



Alison Stone's poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry International*, *Chelsea*, *Barrow Street*, and a variety of other journals and anthologies. She has been awarded *Poetry's* Frederick Bock Prize and *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award. Her first book, *They Sing at Midnight*, won the 2003 *Many Mountains Moving* Poetry Award and was published by Many Mountains Moving Press.

A visual artist, she spent ten years painting the images of the tarot, which were published as *The Stone Tarot*. Readers may explore further at stonetarot.com. She earns her living as a Gestalt therapist in New York City and Nyack.

PARALLEL PRESS POETS

Mary Alexandra Agner	Doug Flaherty	Lynn Shoemaker
Marilyn Annucci	Allison Funk	Shoshauna Shy
Mark Belair	Max Garland	Austin Smith
F.J. Bergmann	Ted Genoways	Thomas R. Smith
Richard Broderick	John Graber	Judith Sornberger
Lisa Marie Brodsky	Barbara L. Greenberg	Alex Stolis
Harriet Brown	Richard Hedderman	Alison Stone
Charles Cantrell	Rick Hilles	Judith Strasser
Robin Chapman	Karla Huston	Heather Swan
Jan Chronister	Catherine Jagoe	Katrin Talbot
Cathryn Cofell	Diane Kerr	Marilyn L. Taylor
Temple Cone	John Lehman	Paul Terranova
Francine Conley	Carl Lindner	Don Thompson
Paola Corso	Sharon F. McDermott	Jeanie Tomasko
James Crews	Mary Mercier	Alison Townsend
Alice D'Alessio	Corey Mesler	Dennis Trudell
Paul Dickey	Stephen Murabito	Tisha Turk
CX Dillhunt	John D. Niles	Ron Wallace
Heather Dubrow	Elizabeth Oness	Timothy Walsh
Gwen Ebert	Roger Pfingston	Matt Welter
Barbara Edelman	John Pidgeon	Jacqueline West
Susan Elbe	Andrea Potos	Katharine Whitcomb
Karl Elder	Eve Robillard	J.D. Whitney
R. Virgil Ellis	James Silas Rogers	Mason Williams
Fabu	Allegra Jostad Silberstein	George Young
Richard Fein	Michael Salcman	Tracy S. Youngblom
Jean Feraca	Kay Sanders	
Jim Ferris	Carmine Sarracino	



Parallel Press

University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries



Parallel Press
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries

parallepress.library.wisc.edu
ISBN 978-1-934795-37-8