



# Fitting Parts

by Kenneth Pobo

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“Many Told Me Don’t” *The Battered Suitcase*  
“Summer of Danke” *Blood Pudding Press*  
“Portrait Of” *Origami Condom*  
“Rumor” *Bay Windows*

## **Contents**

[First](#)  
[Clap](#)  
[Child Molester](#)  
[Come Unto Me](#)  
[Leather Jesus](#)  
[I Don't Like Thinking](#)  
[Going Upstairs](#)  
[Unprinted Obituary](#)  
[Break It Break It Break It](#)  
[Lock Me Away](#)  
[Suit-Burning](#)  
[They Laugh](#)  
[He Says His Best Days Were in New Orleans](#)  
[Hustler](#)  
[Warren The Poet](#)  
[Bad Parachute](#)  
[Response to "Changes IV"](#)  
[Fitting Parts](#)  
[Fizzling Out](#)  
[Curiouser and Curiouser](#)  
[Communication Breakdown](#)  
[That Cock Again](#)  
[Matched Set](#)  
[Many Told Me](#)  
[Summer of Danke](#)  
[Portrait Of](#)  
[Rumor](#)

## **First**

First define me  
as a lifestyle choice--  
the rest comes easily  
and quickly.

Those who are  
open  
get shut  
up, shut down  
for the good  
of the family,  
put under  
surveillance  
or put under  
ground. Handing out

Bibles  
at the stonings,  
they read passages,  
sing. We're  
examples,  
things: easy

to kill  
a thing,  
easier still  
to forget  
you did it.

## **Clap**

A poet reads about his wife  
and he having sex. Applause.

A singing former chiropractor strums.  
“Oh, I’ve always thought highly of Jesus/  
He really changed the world.” And  
“Oh, my sweet grandmother/  
we’re so proud of you.” Applause.

Was his potato-peeling gran also  
a racist? Gay-hating?

Cookies. A white-haired mummy reads  
about when he’s in a store and sees  
gay sailors, he has to run, run, run  
out of there, oh my,

I bite the brownie to keep  
from screaming. Loud applause.

## **Child Molester**

Many parents  
strap down  
their kid's brain,  
make the kid do  
whatever they say,

so the kid grows up  
to be like them,  
flat,  
hateful--  
anxious

to make children  
they too will molest.

## **Come Unto Me**

At five, I accepted sad-eyed,  
Stockholmy Christ pictured  
in my Sunday school room  
as my savior.

Jesus—a Jew?  
Who knew?

When he killed a fig tree  
in a fit of pique, no teacher said,  
“Hey, lighten up dude.”

They believed his miracles—  
Jesus, walking on the Baltic Sea,  
causing a sensation  
all the way to Sweden.  
Loving him,  
like getting a good business deal.

Most of the congregation  
bought new cars, new gadgets--  
their kids, we hung out in malls.

## **Leather Jesus**

In a Milwaukee gay bar,  
a man asks me to dance,  
pulls me close,  
kisses me for the first  
time, not knowing he's  
first. Jesus, in black  
leather, stark  
between strobes.  
The corner church  
expects him to give  
a lecture, but he  
stays to see this  
kiss. So many saviors  
present tonight!  
Heaven, closets  
with doors blown  
open, light pouring out,  
warm and wrapping us  
the way skin wraps bones.

## **I Don't Like Thinking**

I don't like thinking  
I'm better than a bee,  
a muskrat, an antelope,  
or even a stony cliff. At least

they don't worry about cars,  
banks and bad haircuts. I'd  
like to bound about like a bee,  
find new bud addresses. Oh,

to swim like a muskrat,  
sleek between lily pads.  
As for antelopes, how  
wonderful to truly be

home on the range. Stony  
cliffs grab the best  
skylscapes. So why get  
proud because I'm part of

a group that stabs lawns  
with pink flamingos, that makes  
*countries*,  
that makes war?

## Going Upstairs

Such polite boys--when we  
want sex,  
one says, "Would you  
like to go upstairs?" We sound

like when I was a busboy  
and I'd offer to pour fresh water  
or change the ashtray. Hey,

we could just do it on the couch--  
nothing up there would mind.  
It's hard  
to be too polite fucking

your ass. Or is it? When  
we cum, our shrieks  
and groans, the bed wet,

messed up, the world  
downstairs gone.

## Unprinted Obituary

As Steve grew he learned how to hide  
so well that by the time he was  
sixteen, nobody could find him.  
He knew he was what he denied  
but found ways to fake it because  
truth created torture. In gym,  
he laughed at jokes they told about  
kids like him. Hatred didn't doubt,

relishing a moving target.  
Steve turned himself into a lie  
to satisfy them, hoped to die,  
hoping his death could stop the threat  
of violence. He hid so well,  
but felt that everyone could tell.

## **Break It Break It Break It**

Melanie's neat, singing  
"Silence Is King Around Here."  
It sure is, unless you're speaking up  
for churches

and family values (nobody  
knows what they are, but  
the term costs me my rights).

Sharpshooter Congressmen  
have me in their sights. I'd  
like to be silent,  
to shut up, so I could  
raise hollyhocks and shoot  
Repub heroin. Then

would I be moral enough? Would  
I have values? Nope. Faggots  
by definition have no value.  
Admit us to cemeteries,  
not barbeques, unless  
of course, we're the main course.

Silence  
is king, but many queens  
are speaking out.

## **Lock Me Away**

Maybe I'd rather be  
locked away than breathe  
a politician's toxic fumes  
or drink a drug company's

arsenic rivers, or eat  
media rat poison—oh,  
to be locked away  
in a room with two cats,

African violets,  
a Howard Tate CD,  
and a key to unlock  
the door to let Stan in

so we can make  
love while leaders  
make mixed drinks  
of piss and iodine.

## **Suit-Burning**

Leaders look sad and warped  
in power ties and cuff links.  
Each word a lie. I wonder  
about their spouses  
and lovers. Suit off,

does the lie stay in place?  
Does it lodge in the crotch?

Our minister thundered  
in a black suit, had his  
crossword-puzzle God  
figured out and written with ink.  
We nodded, said "Amen!" So,

let's burn suits. If  
the suited dead can't take it,  
strip them!  
Make them walk naked--

even for a minute,  
a cold truthful wind  
snapping their behinds.

## **They Laugh**

In the locker room  
Jack bellows--for him,  
a game, especially football,  
is a song to a guitar. He

memorizes plays,  
quotes coaches, used to  
be in the NFL, received  
passes and blow jobs,  
now weighs over

400 pounds. Seeing  
him on the scale,  
one man yells  
“Put some clothes on!”

They laugh. Death  
clings to many folds  
of flesh. Jack jokes

in his own end zone,  
benches empty.

## **He Says his Best Days Were in New Orleans**

Not sexually  
compatible, Harry  
and Jim last  
a month. Jim's  
into rimming. Harry's  
into long con-  
versations about  
the meaning  
of relation-  
ships.

Jim says his best days  
were in New Orleans.  
Harry doesn't ask why,

goes in  
to take a shower  
and when Harry  
comes out,  
Jim's gone.

## **Hustler**

For five bucks I  
show them  
a commercial  
between my legs  
I'm seventeen that

Brings MONEY  
to buy my girlfriends  
things or coke maybe  
hey! this beats

bagging groceries the way  
these guys look  
at me's a REAL  
trip I kinda  
like it sometimes

get a tip even  
if they just jack  
off when I pull  
down my jeans  
then drop me back  
on clinch street

## Warren the Poet

complains about people  
not getting him: *the poem*  
*I wrote about the sleeping cat*  
*got rejected, the one I did*  
*about a boy getting his eyes*  
*jabbed out, his legs found washed*  
*up on a Lake Michigan shore,*  
*got snapped up, now*  
*what do you make of that?*

Dunno. Maybe  
you write poorly about cats  
and well about violence  
or violence is now what  
a red rose used to be.

Warren says he may quit writing,

says he wants to be  
a leaf.

Poor guy, he's caught.  
New poems work on him  
and won't let him go.

## **Bad Parachute**

when I was falling  
falling & ground  
was fast  
rising to meet me  
I learned I had been  
up

in the air all  
my life & for  
the first  
time I could  
plummet

so I let go  
& enjoyed this  
downward delight

**Response to “Changes IV” by Cat Stevens But Sung by  
The New Seekers on Their 1972 *Circles* Album**

And we all know it's better  
that yesterday's past? Ha!  
Yesterday hides

a pistol in his fatigues,  
looks for only the choicest chests  
to hit. You say let's all  
start living  
for the one's that's going to last.  
What's going to last?

Just tonight while walking  
from my car to my door,  
some kids yelled,  
FUCKIN' FAGGOT!  
Hate,

a mosquito spray fog,  
we're all coughing  
asthmatics,  
the ambulance always late.

The army  
(yes, they defend me, right?)  
fired seven translators for being

gay.

Oh.  
And we all know it's better  
that yesterday has passed--

now let's all start living  
ooops--killers on skateboards,  
killers in pulpits,  
dead

bodies,  
too many to bury,  
flesh slipping off bones  
onto streets.

## Fitting Parts

The minister says that  
God didn't intend  
homosexuals because  
our parts don't fit. His  
God, Henry Ford,  
people are cars  
off the line. You can get  
matching parts easily. But  
some don't drive,  
and some think  
cars exhaust. Me?  
I'm happy with your parts,  
boyfriend, like them  
just as they are. You're  
a good fit! And if  
Henry doesn't like it,  
let him go back  
to his assembly line,  
let him manufacture steel  
mice to dart down  
America's highway maze.

## **Fizzling Out**

The television pukes. No one  
cleans it up. Vomit  
brims up to the windows,  
hides the clematis. We go  
to bed. The house  
stinks. In the morning,  
fresh coffee.

It's still there,  
the roomful of upchuck.

Bye. Have a good day.

## Curiouser and Curiouser

August, humid and smelling of funnel cakes  
and sausages, we stroll in the Clearfield  
County Fair. We've just seen Andy Kim,  
Lou Christie, Maxine Nightingale,

and Martha and the Vandellas perform,  
4 musical orgasms. Your  
94-year-old grandmother's hand-sewn  
pillow won a blue ribbon. We visit

the poultry. So many chickens!  
I won't say "They're all alike" ever again.  
Some look haughty, red-crested,  
others thin, models after

a long photo shoot. Horses sleep.  
The sheep sound techy, like why don't  
these goomers just let us sleep. Among  
pigs we see a young man wearing a t-shirt:

I HAVE THE DICK SO I MAKE THE RULES.  
His laughter and empty eyes. We get snow cones,  
don't speak of him till we're back  
in our motel room, two men

who love each other. We wonder  
if he has a girlfriend—maybe  
she'd think he's funny. Until  
he enforces.

## Communication Breakdown

A man with too-big glasses and a tie close to his neck asks:

Name.

Aaron Stern.

Parents.

Sappho and Walt Whitman.

Excuse me?

They're two gay poets.

No, you don't understand, your real parents.

Sappho and Walt Whitman.

He snarls. That neck vein the tie almost hides bulges.  
You won't get any money if you don't tell us.

But I told you. Without Sappho and Whitman,  
I'd be dead. My life began when they gave me life.

Next! he says.

Please, I'll starve. I'm broke. I came here for help.

Next! he says, dismissing me,  
shaking his head, eyes like brown coffins suddenly open.

## **That Cock Again**

the one I'm supposed to  
put my lips around,  
the one that's supposed to  
drill my ass. No matter

where I go, it's there,  
waiting, like the kid who  
stole my milk money  
in third grade. When I sleep,

I dream it's coming  
at me, making demands,  
swinging from a heaven-hung  
chandelier. Money-making,  
money-spending, money-saving  
cock, you never soften, are

like a burning house.  
You want me to play  
firefighter, to put you out,

but you put out only  
to put out some more. I fall  
on my knees. No  
is no option.

## Matched Set

Nobody wants me to get married.

Obama says  
he likes me but God adores  
his marriage.  
Bush says he doesn't like me,  
well he loves me but not my sin,  
and God adores his marriage.

Straight men  
deciding what's best for me.

I don't want to marry anyway.

Married people often look nervous.

A signed paper in front of  
a judge, another straight man  
or woman,  
how will that make Stan's kisses sweeter,  
his arms hold me tighter?

Why make straights happy?  
Maybe if Ru Paul ran for office.  
Or Ellen DeGeneres.

Straight. President. A matched set.

## Many Told Me Don't

whistle in a graveyard.  
Bad luck? Hardly.  
I whistle and out from

the ground come the dead.  
To the nasty ones I say *be gone*  
and they go. Edna  
gives me her plum cake recipe.  
Ralph tells me of playing  
whiffle ball. Pretty soon  
we're all whistling,

the graveyard  
the happiest  
place in town.

## Summer of Danke

Schoen, me, you, and Wayne Newton  
live in Vegas, you said: Ohhh,  
isn't he hot? I said no, let's go

get ice cream. You slept with Wayne  
while I mulled fuzzberry or  
chocflute. I've slept with three Waynes  
come to think of it—or were they all  
Dennis? Everyone's a Dennis

eventually. Danke schoen, darling  
danke schoen, you think I didn't  
hear you crooning to the bathroom  
mirror? Even the maid told you please  
pipe down. You were in love,

you said, with me, adding a great  
Bette Davis gesture by the door,  
but you must try smoking. I tried  
to be more contemporary, Johnny Depp,  
sensitive and deep-eyed, but you

said I never listen. I'm a stinky  
actor, that's all, and besides you had  
Wayne all over you. Those warped  
45s from his stint on Capitol, what  
a bed they made! Danke schoen,

separate planes and no more lurching  
rain. From now on it's burning  
formica and razor cupcakes.

## Portrait of

In the library I hear a junior  
high history teacher badger his  
sister-in-law: *You have to read  
Neil Boortz's new book, have to,  
I'm not going to give up on this. His*

clothes drab as a fern wilting  
by the window. I picture some girl  
in his class on an April afternoon,  
longing for a Pepsi and potato chips  
but listening to him say that the Iraq War  
will prevent *them* from coming  
to our shores. She raises her hand,

asks how he knows. Then that smolder  
that he gives his sister-in-law  
when she says she'd rather read  
a mystery, her orange stretchpants  
slipping behind the globe.

## **Rumor**

My bear of a man floats  
on an innertube--waves  
slip over me

as my bear drifts  
half asleep. Rumor has it  
that a world rages  
on shore. Water,

if it knows this  
to be true,  
keeps quiet.

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