

BELEAD!

'80s BABY, '90s KID

Poems by Chris L. Butler



BLERD:

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Chris L. Butler

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“I bring what you much need, yet always have.”

WALT WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass*

“A smooth operator operating correctly.”

RAKIM, *Microphone Fiend*

Notorious

after Junior M.A.F.I.A

Just a young kid on these Philly streets
Space Jam shirt, Spider-Man sneaks.
Batman knapsack, Ninja Turtle backpack

walking to the corner store,
gummy bears & rap snacks.
Waitin' for the bus stop.
Vibin' out to hip hop.
Craig Mack on the track,
now I want a wrist watch!

Watch me, mix tunes—like a disc jockey
Feisty, nicely like my melody, it's unlikely
that an MC, will defeat me
in the blend of hip hop & poetry.
I'm lesser known than Butler-Yeats,

But one day I'll be No-tor-ious like B.I.G

On That Time We Went to Universal Studios Because Granny Hit the Lotto

When I was a kid I didn't have cable, so Nickelodeon was a Holy Grail only attainable at my aunt's house on the weekends. That's why when we went to Universal Studios it was my dream to get slimed on the set of Figure It Out. It would've been a new baptism into the Holy Church of Kablam, where Nick Toons were gospel. Cousin Skeeter was the pastor & Keenan was the deacon. We got drunk off of orange soda inside our chalices which would explain why Kel was religiously in attendance. Truthfully back then I was just a Rugrat hoping to say "*Hey!*" to Arnold but if push came to shove I would settle for meeting someone dressed as a Wild Thorn Berry.

Mint Condition

Sometimes in Japanese.
Other times English
no matter the language,
back then Pokémon cards were currency.

& just like dollar bills,
we preferred the holographic ones.
Collecting as many cards as possible
like how cops hand out speeding tickets,
we just *gotta catch em all!*

Regardless of the season, the turning time of year
I was determined to be a Pokémon master.
Although I never won a trading card tournament,
I did once catch a Kangaskhan in the Safari Zone on Pokémon Blue.

Wrestlemania 2000

“Get the tables,” shouted the Dudley Boyz
“BAH GAWD,” screamed JR and the King!

As blood spilled like paint across chairs and torsos
onto the latest victim of that very moment.

Followed by Swanton bombs off of skyscrapered towering ladders.
Meanwhile I, in conjunction with the crowd, lose my fucking mind!

I couldn't cuss back then,
but now I can talk about it.

Grand Theft Auto Vice City was My Guilty Pleasure

When I was in middle school I hid a copy of *GTA Vice City* inside of a *Dragon Ball Z* DVD case next to my Disney movies, Ultimately concealing the game like a bad report card. My mother wanted me playing *Grand Theft Auto* about as much As a mother hopes for her child to get cavities. I think she was afraid that I would grow up to be a villain, running amuck in the streets, stealing helicopters & tanks while wielding rocket launchers at people like t-shirt guns at the circus. Back then, video games were just an escape from the real world. I didn't grow up to steal helicopters or tanks, But I did get more than a few cavities.

16 Bit, 16 Bars: An Escape to Super Mario World

Sixteen bit, sixteen bars
I'm in a new world & I'm in charge
I'm Super Mario & I'm grabbin' stars
I think I can leap from here to Mars!
Bullets whiz past I'll flip over them
Then I'm jumpin' on a Goomba's head
Fireballs to Bowser if he steps to my friends
He can meet me outside Luigi's Mansion
Cause this Game Boy, is advancing
Toad always had my back like a best man
He never let me down, he had the master plan
I had to face King Koopa, in his dungeon.
Gotta do it right, don't wanna start over again.
I knew I had to save Peach to be a hero in the end.
Unless of course my double A batteries died
Or I forgot to 1-UP, & ran out of lives!

Action Figure Diplomacy

My childhood toys showed me that I was destined
to be a writer like tadpoles are destined to become frogs,
or cooped up caterpillars inside their chrysalis
are ordained to become butterflies. I bridged the gap
between action figure enemies. The X-Men & the Justice League
came to a corporate ceasefire known as the DC-Marvel peace
treaty. In my world I created a universe where Spider-Man
was King, & Buzz Lightyear was the Prime Minister
who took the country to *infinity & beyond!*
These plastic warriors lived out stories so creative
Stan Lee would've hired us if not for child labor laws.
One time a rich friend & I created a home movie
with our action figures. If Kickstarter or YouTube
existed back then, perhaps it would've gotten Nickelodeon's
Action League Now taken off the air! It's too bad his parents

made him become a
doctor, because lord knows
I could never afford film school.

St. Denis Fair

Popcorn, cotton candy.

 \$20 from my mother

 Spending money.

Getting dizzy from the Gravitron

 & stumbling out with joy!

 Standing in line

 for the pirate ship with friends.

 Enjoying the moment anyway,

 I laugh,

 Knowing deep down

 this is our last fair

together as a group.

 Next fall means college.

Peanuts, bubble gum.

 A Ferris wheel ride with

 the cute girl from class.

 My heart wallops

 with teen angst.

Smiling faces, holding hands.

 I can't help but hope

 the Ferris wheel gets stuck at the top.

 Sunsets with school crushes.

So much hanging

 on the idea of mutual interest.

 Corn dogs, pop rocks.

I smile as I hear

 the bits of sugar

 dancing in her mouth.

She is *still* cute

even with cobalt teeth.

The music plays a tune of excitement

 to match the mood.

Soft pretzels, sweet Hershey kisses.

 As the wheel turns forward

so does our connection.

& all is right in the world.

Adam Sandler Made Me Realize I'm an Uncut Gem

When I started college I wanted to go to law school.
I figured that's what I'm supposed to do.
I thought I would be an agent for the "*next big thing*,"
as I envisioned myself, my clients, & a championship ring!

I was a lot like Happy Gilmore back then,
A disorganized, lovable, walking disaster!
Unaware of my purpose, until
accidentally falling into my craft like dominoes.

If writing is going to be my golf,
then the least I could do is give it my all.
I'm tired of everyone else having all the fun
I want a lifetime of it, more than 8 *Crazy Nights*.

I desire creative autonomy over my poetics
complete control, with one *Click*.
As I rise from my hell, a USB drive full of unpublished work
Little Nicky would be jealous if he saw my ascension.

Hard Knock Life

for the rhyme sayers

A teacher once asked me who was my favorite poet
I told them to fall back, you probably wouldn't know 'em.

Some call him Hova, others call him Jay Z
I could relate because growing up it was *Hard Knock Life* for me.

& like Rakim, I was a *Microphone Fiend* spittin' freestyles, with the homies.
Unconventional poet, similar to Eazy E,
postal service in the cipher, expedited delivery!

I was with Mary Jane, in Chuck Taylor's & snap back caps. After parties,
ash trays, unfinished cups of Honey Jack. 40 oz in my hand, every weekend

I sucked at beer pong, but with flip cup, I was the man! I don't know much
T.S. Elliot, but I know MF Doom. I don't dig Kipling, but Ludacris is the truth.

Professors say hip hop isn't poetry, well Kendrick Lamar is living proof!
Plus Tupac & Langston Hughes both made the crowd move...

This One Time, in Peer Review

This one time, in peer review
I was told that my poems were “*rappy*,” followed by,

“Hip-Hop isn’t poetry.”

& while they saw my rhymes as pathetic,
to me my bars are electric, like super hero Static Shock.

My art is accompanied by dope.
Dope melodies swimming through
deep blue seas of haters.
Perhaps it is them,
who does not want me to succeed.

I simply say, *“I’m not a rapper, I’m a poet & nobody said a
damn thing when Walt Whitman’s rhymes were flowing!”*

If he can carve his face into the pumpkin known as this genre.
Then I will certainly find my own to shine through.
& whether it is All Hallows’ Eve or not, I will always be a
Jack-o-lantern, beaming like the bosom of a fire pit.

I’m glad I called their bluff,
because their poker face
was nowhere near as pretty
As Lady Gaga’s. Besides,
there are no rules for art
& the ones that exist,
are meant to be broken.

Post Grad Submittable Life Be Like

I log onto Submittable,
eyes on the prize like poachers
or vultures—after

locking eyes with their
next carcass. My target is
not flesh, but literary

magazines. Them
Prestigious Reviews. & while
Paris & Manhattan

sound really nice right
now, I've already been to
both of those places.

Instead I would totally
be fine with a night where I
perform a drunken

“Ode to Taco Bell,”
at the Highland Ave location
nearby the University of Cincinnati.

Ode to Taco Bell

I remember back in college,
we used to pool our money
in my dorm, like communists.
My mind would play through
my favorite tune,
the crunch of that first bite,
Doritos Locos Tacos
perfectly inauthentic.
I quench my thirst with a Baja Blast,
while scarfing down a pollo quesadilla.

Live Mas

T-Bell is the stoner's booty call,
no shame in its game.
My friends laugh like Lion King hyenas,
they turn their noses up saying, "*we are thirty now.*"
Spewing negativity onto me like a fountain!
They are too good for crunch wraps.
Chipotle is now their Mufasa.

For me,
like Pogs and LEGOs
Chipotle was just a phase.
I stayed true to my roots,
Succulent cinnamon twists
volcano burritos, & chalupas
bursting with sour cream.
Throw in some KFC biscuits.
Because my feast—*thinks outside the bun.*

A Kwansaba for Captain Planet

I swear he had a high top fade
green, because mother nature was his god
blue skin for his oceanic melanin.
Bro just wanted us to recycle, so
Greta wouldn't have to warn us at
the end of the road when it's
too late. We should have peeped game.

Somebody Told Me I was a Failure, I'll Prove Them Wrong

If you're gonna be a writer,
you gotta come with
that Uzumaki Naruto energy.
Vowing to be the greatest
no matter how many times
they laugh at you, doubt you,
or talk behind your back.
You mustn't bother to care
believing in yourself is the only way.
As the years go by, they'll be shocked
watching you unleash the beast within.
Metaphorically making you
a 9 tailed demon fox with the pen,
or a kindred spirit like Rock Lee
always exhibiting respect for your sensei.
Never abandon your comrades.
even if it means a bloody battle,
even if it means a darker day.
If you win the battle against you
you too could be a literary hokage.
& when you do, we'll celebrate your success
over the biggest bubbling bowl of ramen.

Acknowledgements

“Notorious Like Biggie” augments a line from the songs “Notorious Thugs” and “Spit Yo Game Remix” by The Notorious B.I.G.

“Mint Condition” utilizes the catch phrase “gotta catch em all,” from the Pokémon animated TV series.

“Action Figure Diplomacy” borrows the Toy Story catchphrase “to infinity & beyond” from The Walt Disney Company, while referencing Nickelodeon TV shows.

“St. Denis Fair” refers to the annual fair at the St. Denis Church located in Havertown, Pennsylvania. It also references the classic amusement park ride, The Gravitron.

“Adam Sandler Helped Me Realize I’m an Uncut Gem” is a poetic narrative that incorporates various film titles starring Adam Sandler. These films are property of Happy Madison Productions.

“Hard Knock Life” is a poem title paying homage to the Jay-Z classic, “Hard Knock Life” on the album *The Life & Times of Shawn Carter Vol.2*.

“This One Time, at Peer Review” utilizes a famous line as a title from the film American Pie.

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“Wrestlemania 2000,” The Daily Drunk Mag

Author's Note: This poetry chapbook is completely fictional and satirical in nature. All mentions of various products and/or figures associated with corporations are purely out of satirical/comedic inspiration slightly based on my personal experiences.

Any mention of individuals affiliated with these corporations is not representative of their personal views and/or interests.

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I apologize to anyone who feels slighted. You too are loved.

Chris L. Butler (he/him) is an African American and Dutch, poet, and essayist from Philadelphia, PA and Houston, TX. He is a columnist for *The Daily Drunk Mag*, *Flypaper Lit*, *Afros in Tha City*, and a reviewer for *The Poetry Question*. Chris' poems have appeared in various literary magazines including but not limited to *Perhappened Mag*, *Trampset*, *Lucky Jefferson*, and *The Bayou Review*. Chris is the winner of the 2021 Kurt Brown Fellowship for Diverse Voices, and the 2020 *Daily Drunk Press* inaugural Micro Chap Contest. He is a member of the BIPOC collective *Think in Ink Monthly* founded by Khalisa Rae. His poetry has been nominated for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Chris currently resides on Treaty 7 land, with his wife Yasmin and their German Shepherd, Nickel.



Chris L. Butler (photo by Yasmin Peeran)

