



**I** **LDYLLS**

Caleb Jordan

# Idylls:

POEMS BY CALEB JORDAN



# Stone Corpse Press

© 2025

Caleb Jordan

Stonecorpse.com  
stonecorpsepress@gmail.com

# Idylls

Caleb Jordan

Idylls © 2025 by Caleb Jordan is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS Idylls V-VII have been published in *Black Stone/White Stone*.

To reprint, reproduce, or transmit electronically, or by recording all or part of this manuscript, beyond brief reviews or educational purposes, please send a written request to the publisher at:

stonecorpsepress@gmail.com

Stone Corpse Press





**1**

I

The sounds of summer streaming,  
lithe and light blue, through the window.  
Spring had sprung suddenly  
into its grave. Someone whistled,  
the sun shrieked too far away  
to be heard. Pull! Then nothing  
but misses. Sudden feather  
and bramble. Don't ask me.

Tired of the wind and such  
a sudden ghost, a joke on what  
should be a moment of joy.  
I could rabbit myself into a chase.  
It is a dream, to be on the verge

of death. Quote me or not, it does not matter.

## II

Quote me or not, it does not matter,  
there is nothing really to explain.  
Where do the words belong? What  
place? The wheel turns on a cracked  
axle, useless, and the horse flails

its spidery legs in the heavy air.  
A sudden burst of winter sunlight  
illuminates the red ground, brown  
grass. It is gross to slip into reality

from that turning wheel. Sparking  
and sweet, the dream flutters  
on the end of a kite string.

With a pained snort, a kicking at ghosts,  
the horse and the wheel give up to entropy.

### III

The horse and the wheel turning  
in my mind's eye faster and faster  
until brimming with tears  
I turn and dip my finger in molten gold  
and place a burning drop

at the very center of the darkness  
at the edge of sight. I can hear the horse still  
snorting right in my ear as I fall asleep.

There is night and there might be silence.  
Stumbling to bed, I find the key  
never fits. I hear rain  
splattering the sea. Watch out for me,  
you strange waves whose beginnings

I cannot find.

## IV

No matter how hard I search  
I cannot find sheet music  
for the song I sang at Satan's  
wedding. The tune echoes on the wind,

hidden in the rain bouncing off windowpanes.  
There are no sunsets, no sunrises,  
only the moon caressing

a white horse with soft hands.  
I dream of journeying  
for years across plains and deserts  
to find a song in the empty

whistle of a cave. Tomorrow, I will write  
a poem for inert crosses  
waiting in haphazard rows for the day of judgement.

## V

The day of judgment. Waiting.  
There is one beginning,  
it is ending.  
Out of the corner of my eye

I see a small silver fish  
  
floating silently in the air.

In what way have I said  
create? Try light. Shadow  
stretching all the way to the fish.

Kingly greeting for a princely face.  
At the window with no light; at the  
turn of the air. Stare

at a third eye forming beneath the  
withered tongue of a dying dog.

## VI

Bark of a dying dog, sickly  
dogwood dying at the edge of a dried  
out pond.

I steal

some bark and make tea. I steal

the sound of the wind from its branches,  
seal it here among the rows of words.  
Tannins from split

wood for split foreheads. Cannons  
and big bass drums. Masque written

right at the edge of drunken  
oblivion. Right at the edge  
of equilibrium. Wander the woods  
with me, whisper a secret to the necromancer's wand.

## VII

The necromancer's wand whispers  
me to bed. To bed! Comus, the sweet  
child, does not come to me. I lie  
there and sweat. In the ceiling

I see a woman's face. She is screaming  
out an endless stream

of clouds, she is the mother  
of storms, the back of her head  
is blown out, a bullet

flying through the dark. A poem  
comes to me right as I fall into that dark.

I will not remember it in the morning.

In the morning, I try to write. I smudge  
the ink in my mind. Nothing emerges from the blots.

## VIII

I smudge a bit as my hand rests  
on the page, which is fine.

I pick up my black ballpoint  
pen with intention to write,  
but nothing

springs to mind. On another page  
in my journal, titled Poems  
in Retrospect, I write

“My Nights” across the top of a blank  
page. It is the afternoon, soon  
I must go. Across the street

a door slams. There have been more dead  
cats and dogs on the sides of roads as of  
late.

## IX

Late roads and resting  
stars attend the strange dance  
of time when all the stoplights  
are set to yellow. Cautiously  
optimistic of time and intent,  
cars stream along the silent  
blacktop. A secret is held  
on the lips of the moon.

Sense is hidden in the priest hole,  
waiting for its time to slip  
into the safety of the woods. Crossing  
the road, I see a man stumble into an  
alley to pee. The not-rain narrates my  
walk from light to light.

X

A voice narrates my walk from light  
to light. Away. A way to see. Be  
seen as seeing. Time something and  
time for country to ask.

Not the ghost but the wind.  
Not a shot. No time like.

For want of a good horse and every  
day I might have been a true  
one, for the rhyme. Not as seen

but as felt, like a hand  
searching among maggots.  
A cry and I went to the window,

a wall of windows looked right back at  
my bed, my mirror, my pictures.

## XI

White flower petals scattered all over my  
bed. An image of my brain as a piece of  
paper crinkling and smoothing

until the paper has lost its essence.  
Mirror this with the ways a coyote

does not look like a dog. Newness

springs out of my mouth and I find  
it Shakespearean. What a lucky

little man I am. My paper crinkles again,  
I watch myself do the dishes.  
Lateness, latency issues, wait for me

to get it all together. I cannot feel  
the tips of my fingers, which makes

it difficult to smooth out the paper.

## XII

Smooth out the paper,  
find the folds where the poem  
made a mind. Crave shadow  
in the desert music. When

coming or going, view oneself  
as a bird wing barely clipping  
a cloud. Music as shadow

placing its dark hand on a dune  
and saying, "Rise up and walk."  
A disturbance in the sand:  
a small puddle pulling itself out of the ground  
to worship the shadowed sun.  
Music as shadow and random  
play, beating out time on a hollow horse corpse.

### XIII

I emerge from the hollow horse corpse  
into a desert in a box  
and I cannot find the actual  
door, even though  
it is right there in front of me.  
People come from across  
the world to see me wander,  
and up above the stars are not  
stars but lights of various colors  
and hues. Wonder and wander  
and shame abstractions—death  
is the bottom line—stacked  
as firewood is stacked. The door—  
I am not reaching. I will not reach.

## XIV

I am not reaching. In my mind  
is a door and behind that door  
is a name. Thucydides?  
Pantagruel? Joe? The key to  
the door is glowing blue  
underneath unbreakable glass.  
I claw, I curse, I dream  
of opening the door and finally  
saying the name aloud.  
It hurts to brush freshly cut  
grass with the tender palm  
of my hand. The shapes  
on my journal move themselves.  
Unbidden, the door creaks open.

**2**

(I)

Your form was sleeping on a glassy sea.  
Underneath that sea is nothing  
but more paint. If I look closely  
at the strokes I see faces  
kissing and exploding.  
Roethke died in a swimming pool,  
Berryman in a northern river,  
though neither really dead  
by water. I want to create  
a character to speak for me;  
I don't want to speak  
anymore. In the diving bell  
of my dreams, the stars are slowly  
turning blue for lack of breath.

(II)

Lack of breath and a great light  
coming through the spires. Figurative  
specks of darkness dance

at the bottom of the frame.  
An artist spends a whole career  
for a paragraph or two

in a comprehensive history.  
Look at what was given!  
A storm hovers on one end,

it is throwing the light  
further off the canvas  
into the world of flesh,

movement, noise. Out of the silence  
shines a silent light.

(III)

All light feels silent, steady. I went  
to turn on the bathroom light and nothing  
happened. One does ones best

in the dark. The dishwasher

keeps whirring and dinging,  
but never empties its contents  
on my floor. Eros and Cupid

seem to be fleeting friends.  
On the off chance I feel anything,

I stick a fork in a light socket.  
Suddenly, I am floating above

a field of dead flowers. Peonies  
or pansies, I cannot tell,

I am too far up.

(IV)

Keep watching the hawks. Too  
far gone to really say anything.  
In the year 2000 people were waiting

and still. Gigolo dreams and spilled  
weed. Once I stabbed a doll

before a jury made of piers.  
Oh hummingbird. Winter comes,

I shed my fall  
coat. Between tweets,  
birds end bug lives

like Raid. Poem perfect.  
A box clicking shut  
on my finger.

Pilot the changeling into language fog.

(V)

Everywhere I go I am inundated  
with bird song. Fog talk. Never-  
ending sway of trees

reaching into the clouds  
wetting their many lips  
touching their tongues

with purple fingers.  
Softly, in the night,

I hear them spitting  
into each other's mouths,  
covered by the darkness

of a moonless sky.

I don't like the taste of peaches,  
but I love to brush them against my lips.

(VI)

I bought my cantos at the border;  
I love to brush them against my lips,  
and let the pages bleed a little bit.

In April, a false frost comes  
and goes, only having tapped  
faintly at the windows. In the yard,

my Rose of Sharon waits  
to bloom. So patient with its fat  
bulbs, it is a marvel of natural

engineering. When I go, can it

come with me? It is silent

on the matter no matter  
how many times I ask.

In my dreams, it is always blooming.

(VII)

I am a very shaky guy.  
Ours is not to reason why,

but it could be something passed down  
from generations of nervous folks

exclusively bred to live  
in tree houses, born to constantly  
sway. Oh, I am a true one:

my heart beats one beat,  
takes a breath, considers the leap,  
and beats on again into the blue.  
This is a secret between me and you  
(Watch out! Someone is reading  
over your shoulder). Let me

tell you lies a poem tells.

(VIII)

I tell myself lies with poems  
all the time. It is fun.

Sometimes, I read and nod  
in agreement with something  
disagreeable; sometimes I find  
a bad poem to be good

in a certain light,  
on a certain day,  
it pleases me in my present mood.

Which is not poetry.  
Is poetry. Questioning,

I stand before a world suffused  
with the joyless joy of dancing light:  
blue, green, pink, orange, yellow, black, clear.

(IX)

When I close my eyes, I can still  
see the light. My cat sniffs my hand  
as I try to write. Across the street,

a white car and a black car stop  
in the middle of the road and exchange  
pleasantries between them without

turning down their music. I watch  
some strange off-white clouds scatter  
themselves over the sun,

and then suddenly pull themselves apart,  
scattering their secrets into the atmosphere.  
My cat curls up in my lap.

I wish I could go the way of the clouds  
and kiss the sun with my disintegrating mouth.

(X)

A red understanding. Stars  
falling from crowns  
and the flooding earth  
drowning the foals of prized  
racehorses. Stallions darker  
than the night. Sand bursts  
forth from my eyes  
as I plant a pipe bomb  
underneath a white Ferrari.  
Tree tops like neurons

almost always almost touching.  
Every sleep the brain washes  
itself, sloughing off dreams  
into a dark yellow stream.

(XI)

I am beginning to forget  
what I started and why.  
I watch Agnes on a beach  
from my beach. A boat approaches,  
leaves without saying a word.  
The cat hangs its head and cries.  
Somewhere a world is. Verite.  
Yes, I can speak it, but when  
I sit down to write...it flies  
away on a norther.  
Sometimes, when pumping gas for example,  
I feel the wind hit me just right  
and I am alone at sea on land,  
the curve of the earth slips under my shoes.

(XII)

Under my shoes it is slipping,  
the wet kiss of pavement  
tumbles me up into the air  
like loose change in a dryer.

I tumble between finger  
and thumb to the forceful hum  
of subwoofers and quasars.  
Picked up by happenstance,

the rhythm bounces across  
the universe. A drowned rat in a pond,  
the great dark center of a whale's eye,  
the looking up at the ceiling

so I can see my own thoughts tumble in real time.  
There are no hands able to open the gift.

(XIII)

The gift has been verified  
to exist, after forty years  
of testing and experimentation.

The field is decaying, phlegm  
in the lungs of the universe,  
logic has escaped in a laundry  
basket while the guards were looking

the other way. Time to avenge,  
says the poet. Drink the spirit  
up and flap your wings in time  
with the wind slipping among

the cracking leaves, ready to fall.

Falling leaves. The inflationary epoch  
exploding. Nothing into more nothing.

(XIV)

Color will kill us, writing  
a sudden sunset on the poet's  
inner eye. Every light is a dying  
light, rage and fear are perfectly  
fine responses. The whole system

is stupid. Speaking turquoise  
to the turtledove. Finally growing  
a dream mustache at the quasi-

man falling into an ever-raging  
sandstorm. I would call myself

a translucent skull draining  
a moment of peace away  
from the reading public.

Cosmic graying impulse found in the impressionist storm.

Caleb Jordan is a poet from Oklahoma. He has a PhD in Creative Writing from Oklahoma State University, and spends his free time as all Oklahomans do (searching for evidence of the existence of Bigfoot and other "cryptids").