



# I am Trying to Break Your Heart

By Kevin Young

I am hoping  
to hang your head

on my wall  
in shame—

the slightest taxidermy  
thrills me. Fish

forever leaping  
on the living-room wall—

paperweights made  
from skulls

of small animals.  
I want to wear

your smile on my sleeve  
& break

your heart like a horse  
or its leg. Weeks of being

bucked off, then  
all at once, you're mine—

Put me down.

I want to call you *thine*

to tattoo *mercy*  
along my knuckles. *I assassin*

*down the avenue*  
I hope

to have you forgotten  
by noon. To know you

by your knees  
palsied by prayer.

Loneliness is a science—

consider the taxidermist's  
tender hands

trying to keep from losing  
skin, the bobcat grin

of the living.

Kevin Young, "I am Trying to Break Your Heart" from *Dear Darkness*. Copyright © 2008 by Kevin Young. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC. All Rights Reserved.

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## Poet Bio



Kevin Young was born in Lincoln, Nebraska. He studied under Seamus Heaney and Lucie Brock-Broido at Harvard University and, while a student there, became a member of the Dark Room Collective, a community of African American writers. "I feel like a poem is made up of poetic and unpoetic language, or unexpected language," Young said in a 2006 interview with *Ploughshares*. "I think there are many other vernaculars, whether it's the vernacular of the blues, or the vernacular of visual art, the sort of living language of the everyday." For roughly a decade, Young was the Atticus Haygood Professor of Creative Writing and English and curator of Literary Collections and the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at Emory University. Young is the poetry editor of the *New Yorker* and the director of New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

## More By This Poet

### Ode to the Hotel Near the Children's Hospital

By Kevin Young

Praise the restless beds  
Praise the beds that do not adjust...

Living

## Negative

By Kevin Young

Wake to find everything black  
what was white, all the vice...

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## More Poems about Love

### Come Back

By Rocket Caleshu

I hate how I can't keep this tremor inside, this mute  
matter of being made extant, this shiver in being, in...

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### That's My Heart Right There

By Willie Perdomo

We used to say,  
That's my heart right there...

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### How to Triumph Like a Girl

By Ada Limón

I like the lady horses best,  
how they make it all look easy,...

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### Sestina in Prose

By Katharine Coles

It was like climbing a mountain to those of us who'd climbed one. To the others, it was like, I suppose, something else. In other words, we let everybody find her own figure of speech....

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By Charif Shanahan

When I say *But mother, Black or not Black,*  
*Of course you are polyethnic,* your look does not change...

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### “Un Tintero,” Inkwell

By Desirée Alvarez

Anger is the other person inside  
*mi garganta, my throat...*

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