

BEAUTIFUL

OUT

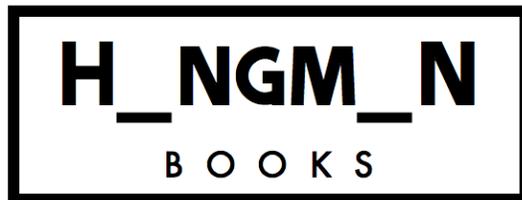
NICK STURM

# **B E A U T I F U L O U T**

**Nick Sturm**

# BEAUTIFUL OUT

Nick Sturm



[www.h-ngm-nbks.com](http://www.h-ngm-nbks.com)

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“Something befriends me and hurts  
At the corners of each thing I love.”

**- Kenneth Koch**

## B A B Y H A M M E R

Living is a matter of speaking  
more often & adamantly through conch shells  
Of knowing sometimes it's best to throw everything  
on the floor To cry through a closed door  
& figure it out later To get rid of  
a few things in favor of keeping more  
avocados around Dissonance & donuts  
Spontaneous & incompleteness A great digression  
in the form of ten apples on your head  
It's silly but what else would you rather be  
basking in Running around like an idiot  
for the sake of someone else's happiness  
You've got to believe it's worth it  
to give up every now & then How else  
to use a see-saw than to laugh at the imbalance  
we can't help fuck the whole thing up with  
New sounds in the morning New bar  
around the corner Let's take it all in  
until nothing's intact Or let's cut it short  
& love It's true what we do won't touch  
everyone But we can hit what we don't know  
hard enough it hits us back A little  
reverberation A little book teaching you  
what shoes & eyes are Learn to point  
Pick it up & point at yourself Learn  
to say bye bye Say you never know  
how things will turn out Repeat & repeat  
Hit & hit again There's no reason to cry  
until there is & even then Even aflame  
today is going to be a good day

# I KEEP FORGETTING THAT EVERYTHING YOU SAY IS CONNECTED

The pamphlet contains no information  
regarding how little a bed can be or what  
you are doing with those teacups You with  
the what face in the what grass Who saves who  
when information is lacking The pamphlet  
keeps talking about bees & how funny  
it is to be an appendage An actual  
canyon I just keep moving through  
towards a very common problem Everything  
divided by something Like how to know that  
something without touching it Me  
& this couch All those citizens  
in the field Some friends in Tennessee  
not fighting a war or anything Just seeing  
a peacock over a lake I feel totally  
cardiovascular How I keep it in  
I don't know In the afterlife I think  
I'll be almost the opposite of instructions  
Kind of blurry Wishing I could stay  
here or in Tennessee or wherever else  
you are You with the sad face  
in the sad grass More than an appendage  
More than a bed Kind of like a bee  
Meaning if you really love something  
lick it

# HUNDREDS & THOUSANDS

I lick the sky Dumb blue gathering  
Noise covered in chemicals Pretty  
little berries I make vague static  
Ear static My mouth in my hands A wishing  
to be eaten & human fingertips reaching  
I rolled on the rug this morning I don't  
know what I'm doing Dumb moan  
Moaning light against the bird life I'm incredible  
& dumb Some gathering chemicals  
My brain an aperture doused in birds  
Bird chemicals The sky eating birds  
one at a time I promise I don't know  
This time the sky will moan Incredible  
summer & its static Breasts  
in the wet static I touch you  
I won't eat you I don't know  
Little bird unsaid Some chemical inside  
& inside the birds some unsaying  
A field Static in the form of  
I don't know Just look  
Hundreds & thousands of strawberries

## UPSTAIRS WITH HIS SANDWICH

Instinct to assemble    Instinct to hoping  
things will turn out for the better  
That's how I got here    With nothing to show  
but this fixation on what can't be fixed  
Din & contradiction    Shame & splendor  
spilling into all the living rooms & dance floors  
we've shared    A belief in the ruins  
of our own conclusions colludes us into battle  
& crumble    Screaming that you mean so much  
to meaning    Despite this acre of erratic light  
I keep sinking into the same damn things  
over & over    In front of all these people  
open & worse than ordinary    Another guy  
with a sandwich    Another other at the edge  
of the awful    I'd be wiser to abandon this  
vagueness & go talk to that girl in the green shirt  
Ask her where fleeth the wonder    What  
kind of flowers I should fill this room with  
to have her    Beautiful beautiful    Animal  
animal    It's so great we have the capacity  
to kiss each other's faces    It's so great  
I lost everything    Even my sandwich  
Even my exclamation points    Though you know  
I'm exaggerating now    I'm miles away    I'm  
over there admiring your tomatoes    Glee & grain  
alcohol    Happenstance & hopelessness  
What I lost wasn't everything

# THE ERA OF CONFUSION BEGINS

I want to be a smaller pony I want  
to be a silver cup For the flowers to  
stand up & furnish my life with joy  
I don't want to be a pile of duct tape  
& sun I don't want to be a candle  
burning in a tiny temple No  
I want to be some handsome  
acoustic behavior All formlessness  
& you & me wet with content The sea  
overwhelming us A big fumbling  
window collecting in the sky There's nothing  
I'd rather be doing than having  
elaborate hedonistic parties Than using  
my mouth to love you But now it's just  
me Me with my pony hands burning down  
to rain The sun making noise all over  
my pony face Your face telling me  
from afar there is no smaller pony

## ACTUALS & POSSIBLES

You say a negative thing about pudding  
& I simply cannot agree We throw our hands  
in the air & spend all day discovering  
our newfound handlessness It is liberating  
but also frustrating to not agree About furnishings  
About windswept plains About what to name  
what we're doing Is it debris removal  
or a dream Is it a squirrel in the sun  
or a squirrel in the rain When there is an idea  
I hear it is easier to have your own idea  
by saying no to the other idea I like that  
A spoon jangles in a cup & a spoon  
does not jangle in a cup One or more  
things change & that is called life How I sputter  
in the grass all morning looking for a way in  
A way into the party where I'm told  
how long I've been sleeping  
& I simply must agree So I wake up  
& feel

# T O D A Y I W O K E U P B A F F L E D

Today I woke up baffled The light  
questioning everything & everything answering  
*OK OK I am ready* A shower curtain A storm  
of daffodils continuing to be alive  
The whole day a possibly wet thing  
full of responsibility My mouth doesn't want  
to play along It wants some fine noise  
I can loosen myself in It wants that friend  
with her way of saying *You are not dead*  
*just trying* I hook myself to a cup of coffee  
to begin again I mouth and remouth  
the word *suddenly* hoping what  
happens next will happen I don't know  
if it's a question of being sincere or being true  
though I know when someone says *Suddenly*  
*it smelled like a field* they are being honest  
As honest as their body will let them I can't just stop  
using my hands I can't just walk into the world  
& feel fulfilled I have to try & I have to  
want the rain The rain warm & irreverent  
on my skin even if it means nothing Today  
I woke up new & also the same A horse inside  
a giant cake An accident waiting  
to happen to everything

# THE ROOST

It takes a little silence    Some spit  
to sing    The way building  
an altar of coffee & talk  
stains us holy and un-    Twists us  
family    My family of birdhearts  
hurtling into teenage lakes    Our faces  
sullen    Our asses great  
& great are the flames  
that lick our engines    Great are  
the trees that floor us    Love us  
Render us wealthy with pleasure  
When the sun turns off we assemble  
into palaces of beer    Into the trial  
& error of this confounding  
gala    You tell me to keep  
my eyes on the distant bodily  
softness    That we're getting closer  
together    To bed down in  
the inexplicable    Which  
is kind of hot    Which is wet  
& an actual belief system  
Basically lemonade    The shared  
mist on our lips    All of this is  
maybe a mistake    Maybe a joke  
about going to the inappropriate  
woods    But either way  
joy    Either joy or  
more joy    All accident    Our  
little religion drunk on clouds  
& la la la    You know  
what I mean    Birds of a feather  
fuck & fuck-up together

# BEAUTIFUL OUT

Between towns there is  
another town Between people  
there is a moment & in  
that moment a voice is lodged  
One day it is the shape of  
some aqua yarn Another day  
it is the shape of a state you'd rather  
not live in In your dream  
we are getting married but I am  
not there No one knows we're not  
together Everyone is beautiful  
but no one is taking pictures You say  
Why aren't you taking pictures  
You say Why is this happening  
in my parents' garage This  
isn't how you wanted it You don't  
know why I'm not there It's over  
but I'm still supposed to be there  
This is our wedding This  
is our only wedding In this world  
I'm in another town having dreams  
too But to be honest  
I can't remember them at all  
When I close my eyes I see you  
backlit by birds I see a very  
large cookie & above me I feel  
the sky propped up on stilts  
With my misery I reach  
for mercy Our greatest years  
spill into the smallest words  
In another town between other people  
the moonlight bleeds down

## SPORADIC RESISTANCE

It was all wrong The radio  
sobbing The windows cursing  
me & my silly ass parade of synaptic  
misfires A kind of déjà vu where you  
are always almost falling into my arms  
A brutal veering while the cat keeps  
sleeping But all I'm doing is  
describing something I can't  
& I really can't I just want  
to say These are pretty whatever  
they are To not have to fight myself  
replaying our joke about where my mind  
is in the morning I'm always right here  
towing an anchor through the flowers  
without you & I don't want to admit that  
sustains me as much as it kills me I'm not  
admitting that I'm admitting that  
it's my faltering I couldn't give up Couldn't  
pick up a trumpet or your hand & remember  
what else I can do with this mouth  
But look at me reaching after fact & reason  
when I need it least The breeze gasps  
against me I lick my wounds  
into knots A full-size horse  
walks into the middle of the room  
& we ride

# COMMONWEALTH OF LONG BLUE FLOWERS

Amorous & haunted Bitterness  
& bells What kind of sorrow  
is only yours One path leads  
to the waterfall The other  
to the trash heap & your soul is all  
busted up for either Performing impractical  
actions with impractical results Same old  
feeling obsessively rendered Unraveling  
& uncertain Mandible & stumble  
I'm not sure a hatchet would help  
what you keep in your blouse I want  
to say I'm intact but my head is more  
flare gun than firework A call for help  
masked in oh my god that's beautiful  
Make a mess Read a book We all  
might need to go to bed more often  
together Put on & take off our  
intentions without purpose It's all good  
as long as no one's decent As long as  
we end up loose & whipped by mist  
into gladness Nothing I feel  
I keep for myself Everything I lose  
I give back in flowers Promise & principle  
Riot & grace Since I got here  
I've been hugging everyone

# SONNET OF POWERFUL INDIFFERENCE

This music is a warning I'm nothing  
but stupid No I really wouldn't  
call that lake real Lake a stage  
for dusk to bang against your hips For  
studies linking happiness to frigates  
to be proven absolutely true What is true is  
your illegible flowers Sitting on the porch  
watching birds exhale Believe me I swear what I mean  
when I'm lying Let's do that thing  
with our roller skates in the sun Let's paint  
the streets young Unending & blue  
That's what my mouth said Does it sound  
like thinking I miss you I mistake you  
for the sky taking a breathe & I'm a tendril of fluff  
Clattering fluff A concert of debris  
plush with sawdust Singing & singed Let's go  
to this city & say nothing all day I need to  
get back to you with thinking & birds There's no  
other way There's no other way  
into how I can forget you But I'm sure  
I'm framing this wrong What's happening  
is shorthand for worship The worst kind  
of dust Dust on the fountain Dust on the sun  
sculpting your hips My kind of warship  
The birds will still love you Even though  
they're dead I shouldn't have come here  
I shouldn't have said I'm trying to live better  
& many other things

# FAKE WHITE COUCH

Hello anonymous harbor Hello  
friendly people at the barbeque I am done  
sleeping Thank you & now I would like  
to hum a little Avoid meat with you Laugh  
for specific reasons One being that I am saying  
impossible things about couches Another being  
the arc of complicated feelings How they  
cover us with mistakes These human things  
Anchors & pieces of toast Anything to make you  
empathize with me in a poncho That's how  
dumbly I feel Compared to me even  
a small boat is bigger Always limited by shape  
& a necessity for quiet people speaking loudly  
about slinkies & whales For no reason  
I love them In a dream This ability to smuggle  
our hands into each other's hair Hello quick  
suffocating sweetness Hello somebody  
with impractical wisdom about hand signals  
Your shoes are great Also the energy  
we exchange How it is carried around  
for a long time Even in the backyard Even  
in a small boat going far away Everyone is like  
wow With shame on my heart & lemonade  
in my mouth This is my best disguise

## A WHORL THAT ASCENDS

My hands do not think They get  
lit up The air just happy  
something is happening A feeling  
I can get my hands into Maybe make  
some noise or attract your attention  
using a foam finger A large finger  
I swing mercilessly Overhead  
there are a lot of extra heads  
belonging to birds Also  
someone I am not sure  
if there is a better way to say this  
Someone looking at the cloud tops  
from above Like what is a law  
& how can I repeat this  
using words At the exhibit I touch  
everything with my mouth My mouth  
does not attract much attention It acts  
so unsure not of itself  
but of the world The world  
the shape of these colors What  
an exhibit this is What a way  
to believe in this world & its clouds  
All open & a whorl My hands  
when I land dressed in light Where  
I land like my mouth  
is not up to me

## THREE-SIDED SQUARE

A door is a portal A painting  
is an emotion Clouds in the diorama  
try to mean clouds in the sky It is clear  
the casual vibration of everything against everything  
presents us with real errors In thinking  
In feeling I leave them on a hill  
lacking scale or center In your impossible bed  
the proper actions fail me One thing  
always another thing Ferris wheel  
& lemon tree First kiss & last Some weird  
breed of potential Like put the emotion  
next to the portal Put the door  
in the painting I can tolerate that Not knowing  
what the shape of this shape is Though of course  
I know somewhere But by now I'm tilted back  
into my face's face I'm taping pollen  
back to the flowers Just trying to  
try harder ends in like like like & I can't  
get it right It's just like that A video  
of me & a camel where I am trying to be  
the not-real camel I'm not kidding  
It's a real thing People kissing  
in the kitchen A need to put the doors  
back on their hinges Or not To leave  
it all open Not correct Not anything  
other than what it is So when I say I love you  
I'm not wrong I'm just not in control  
Every side of me uncorrected The best I can do  
to make it fit

# M A N Y T H A N K S

There are so many reasons to celebrate  
For instance underwear  
& how freely it is used The particular  
way I stand on this rug All this  
energy already In my body  
A choir in a small enclosure Like dancing  
on this rug A pattern my body makes  
when it is free & when it is frustrated  
Like how many more ways can I show you  
what I don't know No I haven't  
seen this movie before No I don't think  
I could do this better if I thought about it  
Why aren't you dancing too Would you  
rather be some dumb trellis waiting for whatever  
flower Or would you like to disregard  
your underwear & become terrible  
& new It is not so much a question  
as a movie A pretty good movie  
according to the reviews One guy said  
it was sort of a dream with no ending  
Someone else said they didn't understand  
why everybody was clapping

## IN THIS PURPLE HOUR

Birds can be pink That happens  
Drapes might fall across your shoulder  
& that happens Your part of the cookie  
might disappear That happens & that  
is a sadness In this purple hour  
we are a magnificent lung Irrefutable  
harmony along the shoreline I describe  
brand new things Little living things  
we have never seen Not pieces of furniture  
or official documents but a species  
no longer not alive I'm lost on a tiny  
island too I can hear the waterfall  
& that's normal here How did this island  
get so overgrown with friendship How  
did I crawl through so many questions  
without becoming a saint I forgot  
to mention While you were sleeping  
I held an umbrella over your dreaming head  
That happens A brand new thing  
My actions kind of useless & beautiful  
That always happens

# NEW LOVE

It's not up to me It's always  
upending me Leaving me soggy  
& grateful & sleeping next to mountains  
Soaked in a weird hue of whatever  
the flowers need to get by Ask me  
how many times I have to leave  
before I'm gone Ask me what  
is in these scones A little anarchy  
& currants never hurt anyone I'm probably  
wrong about that I've been wrong  
for a damn long while now & even  
fireflies in the courtyard give me a hope  
I can't hide from Tragedy & ecstasy  
& a cup of coffee & the ducks  
looking ridiculous just to get by  
Me trying to extract the unknowable  
from this tiny piano You on a train  
with your questions & smiling I'm sure  
I don't have to tell you what's new  
isn't the love It's the way  
you touch the window without caring  
you can't stop what passes by That's it  
The rest is shit & glorious  
mercy Ankle in the light Note  
on the windshield All this brutal  
leisure Let me say it simply I need you  
to help me finish this scone

# EVERYTHING LOOKS SMALLER TODAY

You say We are not correctly  
alone & that makes me feel  
pretty champagne Gives me animal  
focus Gives me reason to erupt  
unregulated bramble A little  
embroidered hooray Gathered  
around the pizza we are inconsolable  
with want It's true There are enough  
silly hats to go around Enough  
basements to fill with volume But today  
I'm lacking the appropriate grace  
to be good to this world I say  
the stupidest things I take a piece  
I don't deserve I set important  
things on fire because a cage  
is a cage & if I'm to keep living I've got to  
dismantle something beautiful I know  
I'm not a worthy man All I've got  
is empathy for a bee A smile  
when your door finally opens Just  
enough pressure Just enough lukewarm  
coffee for both of us So please outlast me  
& forgive me my daily indifference  
You've got the wild pony I've got  
this sea Tonight that's bigger  
than both of us A smaller us  
dragging the light back where it belongs

# CLOUD BINGE

I'm barely awake  
enough to mist Yet I mist  
I make things up to see  
if they exist I send sad notes  
into the intolerable architecture of whatever  
at the moment is golden I do not expect  
a loving response I do not expect much  
of the day to save me Not even  
the girls in their jeans & spring dresses  
Not even the basil still growing  
in an old coffee can My mouth is  
not being kissed & everyone knows  
that's no fun Not even the birds can help  
ripping each other apart So what good  
is this commonplace spinning This  
bundle of muddled hungers disguising  
itself as hope Why not buy  
myself a hula hoop & celebrate  
like the world is insisting Why not  
be sincere On the surface  
I'm used up But I'm stupid enough  
to believe in something better I gently tether  
myself to the sun wondering if some  
body is worth falling for Though that's  
not all I want Though I'm already  
down in the grass trying to get to know  
my face again Trying to roll back over  
into the fabregé gowns  
above me endless & undressing

# THE KIDS ARE STILL GROWING

I awoke surrounded  
by glowing Tall grass  
brushing against my wrists  
My dad was there & my mom  
was there They looked  
specifically plover  
I said A cloud is a kind of  
heavy machinery I said  
Hear me out A platypus  
is not an elaborate hoax  
The mechanics of light  
are unimaginable I was  
full of these things These  
things were coming out  
like people from airplanes I  
had arrived & arriving was like  
a small sleeping Suddenly  
my wingspan was incredible  
Suddenly the door was  
drifting Geometry  
tuning itself I said some  
more things I said my mask  
is a thousand roses I was  
a red shipwreck carrying balloons  
I said My party dress  
is in the style of the late queen  
My front legs are tenacious I said  
There is a perceivable whine  
in my child bones My dad was  
glowing too He said We have to  
modify our coffee program  
My glowing mom said I'm going  
to Italy These things seemed  
important But why was  
I here Why did I have all these  
things inside me with no river  
to put them in It was just me  
with all these new things Not  
alone but kind of Every night  
mauling myself to sleep

## A NEW SEASON

Go outside & there's already  
singing Mostly sound Most  
of my mouth a room  
being left It's hard not to  
heap meaning on the moment  
when the engine fails When  
the sprinklers wake up & we lay down  
at least this once In the grass  
In the afternoon In the snow  
I'll never see again From my window  
I slosh forth I gnaw on the church  
trapped in a rabbit I can't help  
my intentions become clearer  
We rev & we rev & any eyelash  
knows revelation is ubiquitous  
Glimpse of a thigh trapped  
in a skirt That's not heaven  
but it's close Nervous resonance  
gets me closer We all know  
beauty doesn't end It bends  
& we bend to it The floor sparkling  
then giving out A simple enough  
typography We put things on lawns  
saying These can be yours But I'm  
not looking for what I want I'm wanting  
for what I can already see Half  
packed suitcase Some consequential  
syllable to make me believe this attempt  
isn't counterfeit Truth is I'm done  
being sorry Pretty soon  
I'll be dancing

# THE NEW PAINT ON MY MANNERS

Full of nothing & bird noise  
I'm dancing again Being completely  
undone & that's long overdue  
The piano totally sherbet in the bloodstream  
A funny mustache A funny wet  
hello in another language The night  
denting me with joy Forever & ever  
I would actually like to be in a tree Kissing  
every leaf on its wild lips Making useless  
gestures in the sun But oh baby nothing  
is useless Everything is knotted  
pretty fantastic Laced with loneliness  
& baby animals & glockenspiels So I can't  
help pick up the phone & call you  
Murmur colors at you Have another  
just okay beer & another Anything  
for the kind hush Whatever isn't  
only the middle of how you spell glowing  
So let's shoulder up Put too many people  
in a booth & order something that sounds  
nicer Field of familiar hair A way  
to acknowledge our power  
over nothing A nothing to hold onto  
Something small & unruly Overrun  
with horses & flames What's made  
for what's dark

## W I L D E R   B A S K E T S

All day the eye jumps from one  
point of interest to another   The day is  
brimming with points of interest   Marvelous  
goose in the pond   Me & my sombrero  
Swamp I mistake for an airplane   It is  
only natural   But what is natural is  
all guesswork   Green sweater  
abandoned   Field of tiny corn   I see  
a spider on a shoe   That is my secret  
Asking what isn't art   Like a wedding planner  
thawing a box of butterflies   Like  
we have so much time to love everything  
so don't stop   Repackaging brightness  
I think that is our job   To sit in the pines  
experiencing strong emotions   Syncing  
our sprinkler systems to make us look  
delicious   Even when the parachute  
that saves you comes down around you  
be baffled   Give in & guess   A new kind  
of sky   Something you can't escape  
reminding you of home   All day  
we are lemon-scented   All day  
we are ruthless & good   Points of interest  
pillow into questions   In a positive light  
the answer seems to be   Cherish  
what you can   Hold what you can't  
together   Elephants huddled in the dark  
Your hand on the drawstring   Not sure  
what to do next   Just imagine  
the answer is yes

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