



Things I Learned the Hard Way

Esteban Colon

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Esteban Colon is one of the most prolific writers on the Chicago scene. His work is darkly humorous, romantically melancholy, deeply personal, and most of all, incredibly honest. This volume of poetry should be opened and treated like whiskey. Take it in in sips. This much truth can hurt if taken in large doses.

—**David "Buddha 309" Hargarten**, Poet, Publisher at *Exact Change Only*

Filled with hucksters and hustlers, humor and desire, violence and tenderness, Esteban Colon's *Things I Learned the Hard Way* pulsates with the life of neighborhood. Colon as a young poet grapples with the mysteries of women and of male identity, the vertigo of love and passion, and the upending realities of street-life, marriage, and maturity. Even the joys of adult relationships are not without pangs of ambivalence and resignation, the weight of hot words and memories. Colon's work is filled with droll, exuberant detail, and a buoyant, self-disclosing life-force all its own—an irrepressible vitality that will quickly belong to all its readers.

—**Ralph Hamilton**, Editor at *Rhino*

In *Things I've Learned the Hard Way*, Esteban Colon gives the reader a glimpse into hard lessons, relationships both sensual and seething, and a world where "cloud nine doesn't pack parachutes." But beyond the loss and disconnection, there is hope and the honest recognition that "we lie to ourselves/everyday/ everyday/ everyday/waiting/for someone to call our bluff."

—**Donna Vorreyer**, Poet, Author of *A House of Many Windows*, *We Build Houses of our Bodies*, *The Imagined life of the Pioneer Wife*, *Womb Seed Fruit*, *Ordering the Hours*, and *Come out Virginia*

Esteban Colon talks of the kind of deeply personal things that are sappy or embarrassing without ever being sappy or embarrassing. Or self-conscious. Or cliched. He talks about the kinds of things we all live through—one way or another—but the way he says what he says makes it all familiar and new at the same time. Poetry about everyday life that's life like. Entertaining. Exciting. Neat trick. This is simply an outstanding book.

—**Charlie Newman**, Chicago Word Brigade, Author of *Dead Machine City*, *Words*, and other books of poetry

Esteban Colon is a writer and experiential educator from Chicago Heights. He is a founding member of the Waiting 4 the Bus Poetry Collective, the cohost of two poetry venues, and the editor of *Exact Change Only*. His works have appeared in various publications, such as *Rhino*, *CC&D Magazine*, *Avatar Review* and *After Hours*, including collections such as *Poised in Flight*, *Things That Go Bump in the Night*, *The American Open Mic. Vol. 2*, and *Point Mass*. Previous collections of his works, *Between Blue Lines*, and the poetic suite *Edgar Avenue* were released as chapbooks by Exact Change Press and Naked Mannequin Press.

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