

# Love Poems to a Stranger

## beached on the shore of you

beached on the long-sought shore of you  
face-down alone unknown as the wind  
never the great sweep roars an end  
but breath for breath breathless  
breaker piling over white breaker  
ceaselessness here is peace  
our few words the petrel's shrill mews  
driven like nails into gray sea-weathered wood



## Say You Are Driving Home

Say you are driving home in the evening, eating a piece  
of cherry pie, and it is twilight  
and the rain keeps falling – a light rain;  
and a piano on the car stereo keeps tugging you  
away  
like the place the rain keeps suggesting you go  
in its steadily falling hushed voice.

Suppose you've been driving a long time,  
driving somewhere you've been before,  
but you know  
you won't be going there much anymore –  
maybe not at all,  
and the rain and the music make this transition  
seem natural  
as if no place on the planet is more important  
than here, and nothing  
not important now will ever be important.

Say the watershed over which you drive now  
– the car cresting  
the wet road and the faraway music –  
is one you could cross any day you choose.

Suppose it is music to disappear in  
but what keeps disappearing is everything  
not in the car with you,  
so that the cherry pie is more real  
than what, unfinished, you have left behind.

Say it is after work, and you keep thinking of  
an attractive Japanese woman  
to whom the blossoms that were once the cherries  
in this pie you are eating seem apropos.

Suppose the rain and music seem to run together  
in streaks,  
suppose you're reminded of another rain  
and another piece of music you were listening to,  
say 10 years ago and the road flooding  
so that you drove roads that were flowing streams  
halfway up the sides of the car and couldn't  
get home again for 3 days;

suppose that sleeping on the office floor  
you felt your unfaithful wife's deep joy  
in her solitude without you,  
dimly aware of whom she was with.

Suppose that so much has happened since then  
that you are no longer that person  
except  
the rain keeps urging continuity on you  
so that old heartstrings seem exposed  
as if the rain were washing away layer upon layer  
of accumulated soil that is, after all  
very thin,  
and you keep feeling that earlier, younger you  
still alive with his not yet wise pangs  
of sharp new pain.

Suppose that when you get where you're going  
the rain keeps falling and the music  
keeping on going to that place it's going to,  
and you sit in the car and write it all down  
in words of rain.

## Vigil

*(Anima Active Imagination)*

“I have brought you soup,” I said –  
“you are ill, you must take care of yourself,”  
I lied. She had come to the door, only 13,  
wearing only panties and a loosely-buttoned  
white shirt. All the time  
I longed to slide my hands under her  
white panties and over  
her young breasts.  
Her hair was black and her eyes  
were black and flashing. I pulled myself  
back, remembering I must not act.  
That left me standing there, a silly fool holding  
a bowl of hot soup.

“Never mind the soup,” I said,  
“I want to talk to you. What do you  
want from me?”

“I don’t want anything from you;  
I don’t want anything to do with you.”

That hurt, though I had expected it.  
I was at a loss, but could not turn  
and go. Then remembering that attraction  
often underlies a sharp reply, I asked  
her again what she wanted of me.

“I want you to leave me alone  
and stop annoying me,” she said,  
then launched into a tirade –  
my prying, peeping, putting  
my hands all over her, getting unwanted  
into her bed – and by all this trying to find out  
about her, nosing into her affairs,  
into her private life, reading her diary,  
violating her, invading her – she was sick of it.

I let her finish, then asked what I could do  
to make it up to her.

“Perhaps stand 5 years outside  
in the cold, in the snow, through the nights –

5 years outside my window. Perhaps  
then I might take pity on you.”  
It sounded dramatic and adolescent,  
but to please her I began  
to imagine it. However as soon as she left  
me there to begin my 5-year vigil,  
a dramatic fop appeared, dressed  
as Cyrano de Bergerac, attired in French boots,  
a floppy plumed hat, and frilled sleeves.  
He took my place, folded out a table,  
filled it with all manner of good things  
and then began to glut himself  
with food and wine until he collapsed  
face down on the table, dead in his plate. And this  
is what she saw when she returned  
to see how I was getting on in my vigil.

## The Souging of the Human Wind

the ragged breath of the sobbing  
mountainous woman  
seated opposite me in the circle  
could be (if I close  
my eyes) the tears  
of my own beloved – it is  
the souging of the human wind  
in the branches  
I have heard before  
(and will hear while  
time lasts). these branches  
into which each of us has grown –  
each thinking  
that this great wind of grief  
comes to us alone –  
share one thing,  
a cry that escapes  
our many mouths,  
the sound of the wind of human sorrow  
in which we are moved  
as it moves through us.

## Contra Dance

knowing I won't know you  
and another night of contra dancing,  
whirling away together from the eyes  
    of jealousy,  
I write not to lose your forthcoming smile,  
willing waist, and deft  
feet when, in those short whirls  
of privacy, I came within a delicious distance  
of your perfect slim lips and tongue-tip,  
my hands yours at waist and shoulder  
    holding – yours  
just the right size and cool –  
yes you swung  
right into those empty depths  
almost breaking that long, linear effort  
in which I am now involved,  
white legs flashing under a long skirt swept up,  
your playful eyes,  
bouncing wall to floor,  
your happy, graceful soul  
toward which my dancing male leapt.  
I felt your perfect measurements  
and then the larger dance  
whirled me away.

## Slip

slip she jumped  
pink out of my skin.  
it seemed  
as if she had always been there.  
when she left (slip)  
it hurt  
as if she'd always been there.  
i know i always  
want to share the same skin with her.

## The Rain is at it Again Tonight

the rain is at it again tonight,  
pouring endlessly, so constant.  
draining the skies.  
a thousand drops just fell,  
exhausting their momentum against the ground.  
they spent all the hot day climbing  
into the sky – now released.

alone and alone and alone – and why?  
to grasp you is as pointless  
as grasping rain.  
you fall and fall through my life  
run through cracks, run away.  
where are you tonight?

## Why Do You Not Come?

now, when the midsummer night  
is large with possibilities  
oh you do not come –  
you are a thought swept into a corner  
with the turning on of a lamp,  
the night alive  
with your hair blowing across my face –  
i feel your presence, feel sure  
you are there,  
almost run out into the dark after you –  
why do you not come?