

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?