

Valentine Verses

A Collection of Love Poetry Selected by SDPL Staff



Poetry Collection
Arranged by Michael Ashman

Feb 2026
San Diego Public Library

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These poems were curated by Librarian Pauline Wilkinson from the recommendations of library staff at the San Diego Public Library. They were compiled into this collection by Librarian Michael Ashman. They represent a wide range of perspectives on the subject of love. When possible, some poems were reproduced in the original language with an English translation. Most poems were located from online sources with the exceptions of Patti Smith's "The Leaves are Late Falling", (sourced from *Auguries of Innocence* at the Central Library), and "Acceptance" written and provided by Library Assistant Ashu Agarwal. If any poem or poet resonates with you, please feel free to search the library and checkout any of their poetry books!

Thank you to all who submitted poems for this collection!



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A Red, Red Rose

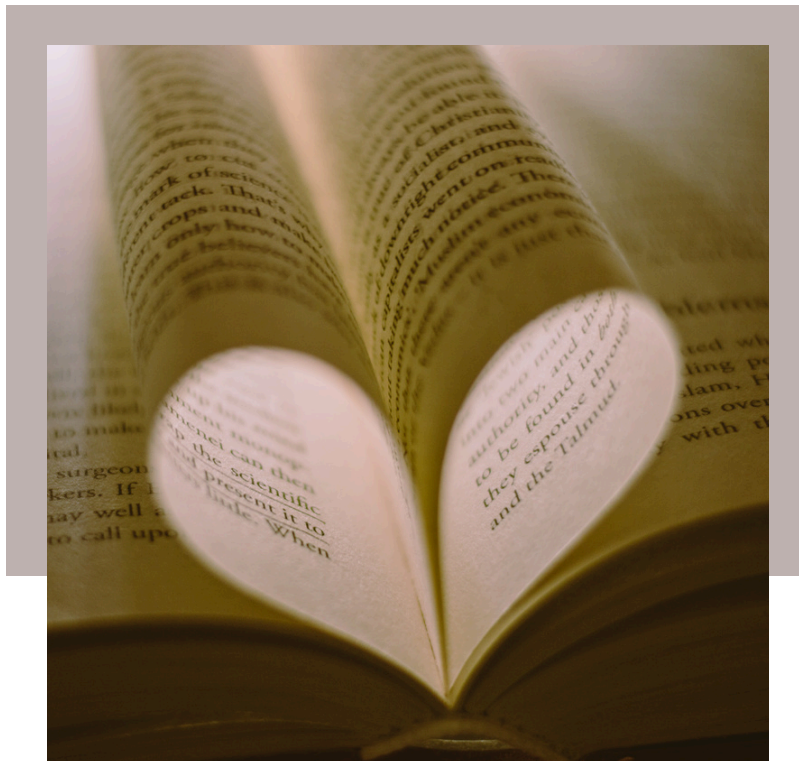
By Robert Burns

O my Luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my luve,
Though it were ten thousand mile.



Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight

By Rose Hartwick Thorpe

Slowly England's sun was setting o'er the hilltops far away,
Filling all the land with beauty at the close of one sad day;
And its last rays kissed the forehead of a man and maiden fair —
He with steps so slow and weary; she with sunny, floating hair;
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful, she, with lips all cold and white,
Struggling to keep back the murmur, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

"Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to the prison old,
With its walls tall and gloomy, moss-grown walls dark, damp and cold —
"I've a lover in the prison, doomed this very night to die
At the ringing of the curfew, and no earthly help is nigh.
Cromwell will not come till sunset;" and her lips grew strangely white,
As she spoke in husky whispers, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton (every word pierced her young heart
Like a gleaming death-winged arrow, like a deadly poisoned dart),
"Long, long years I've rung the curfew from that gloomy, shadowed tower;
Every evening, just at sunset, it has tolled the twilight hour.
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right:
Now I'm old, I will not miss it. Curfew bell must ring tonight!"

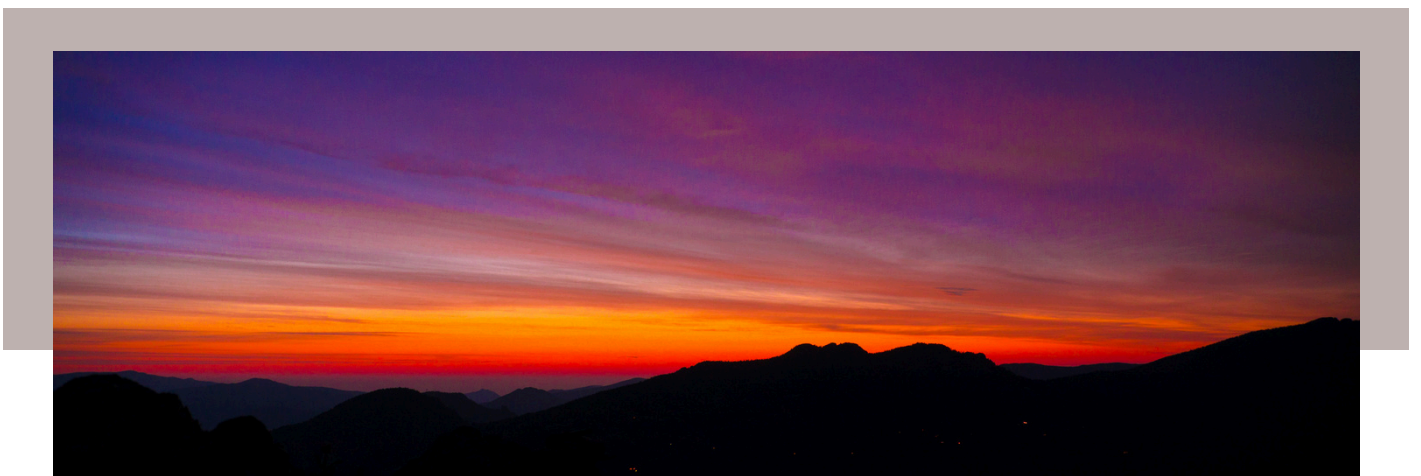


Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow,
As within her secret bosom, Bessie made a solemn vow.
She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,
"At the ringing of the curfew, Basil Underwood must die."
And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes grew large and bright;
One low murmur, faintly spoken. "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

She with quick step bounded forward, sprang within the old church-door,
Left the old man coming slowly, paths he'd trod so oft before.
Not one moment paused the maiden, But with eye and cheek aglow,
Staggered up the gloomy tower, where the bell swung to and fro;
As she climbed the slimy ladder, on which fell no ray of light,
Upward still, her pale lips saying, "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

She has reached the topmost ladder, o'er her hangs the great dark bell;
Awful is the gloom beneath her, like the pathway down to hell.
See! the ponderous tongue is swinging; 'tis the hour of curfew now,
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her breath, and paled her brow.
Shall she let it ring? No, never! Her eyes flash with sudden light,
As she springs, and grasps it firmly: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

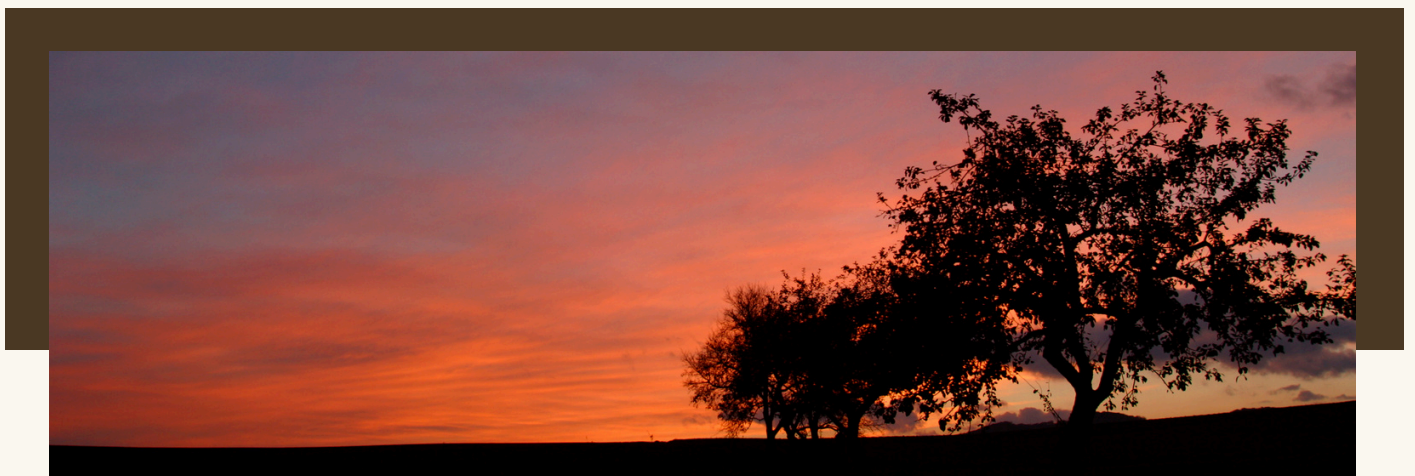
Out she swung — far out. The city seemed a speck of light below —
There twixt heaven and earth suspended, as the bell swung to and fro.
And the sexton at the bell-rope, old and deaf, heard not the bell,
Sadly thought that twilight curfew rang young Basil's funeral knell.
Still the maiden, clinging firmly, quivering lip and fair face white,
Stilled her frightened heart's wild throbbing: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"



It was o'er, the bell ceased swaying; and the maiden stepped once more
Firmly on the damp old ladder, where, for hundred years before,
Human foot had not been planted. The brave deed that she had done
Should be told long ages after. As the rays of setting sun
Light the sky with golden beauty, aged sires, with heads of white,
Tell the children why the curfew did not ring that one sad night.

O'er the distant hills comes Cromwell. Bessie sees him; and her brow,
Lately white with sickening horror, has no anxious traces now.
At his feet she tells her story, shows her hands, all bruised and torn;
And her sweet young face, still haggard, with the anguish it had worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty light.
"Go! your lover lives," said Cromwell. "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

Wide they flung the massive portals, led the prisoner forth to die,
All his bright young life before him. Neath the darkening English sky,
Bessie came, with flying footsteps, eyes aglow with lovelight sweet;
Kneeling on the turf beside him, laid his pardon at his feet.
In his brave, strong arms he clasped her, kissed the face upturned and white,
Whispered, "Darling, you have saved me, curfew will not ring tonight."



The Conjugation of the Paramecium

By Muriel Rukeyser

This has nothing
to do with
propagating

The species
is continued
as so many are
(among the smaller creatures)
by fission

(and this species
is very small
next in order to
the amoeba, the beginning one)

The paramecium
achieves, then,
immortality
by dividing

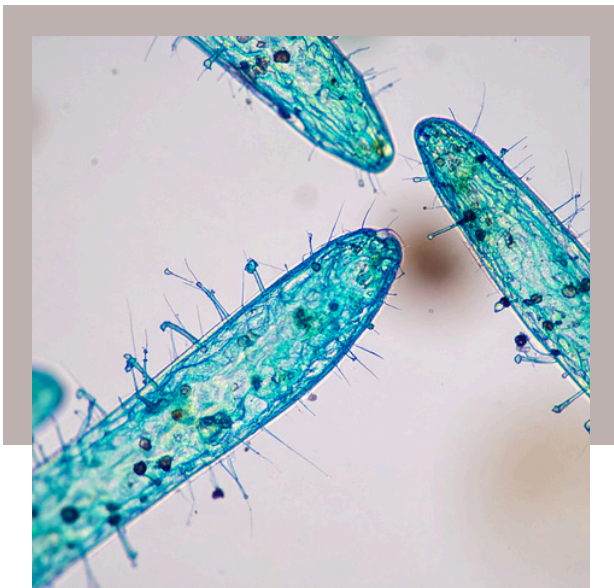
But when
the paramecium
desires renewal
strength another joy
this is what
the paramecium does:

The paramecium
lies down beside
another paramecium

Slowly inexplicably
the exchange
takes place
in which
some bits
of the nucleus of each
are exchanged

for some bits
of the nucleus
of the other

This is called
the conjugation of the paramecium.



That Time You Were Giggling, Giggling, Giggling

By Chen Chen

We were in bed & you were
huh? 11 years, & I'd never heard
this. Of course,
 you'd giggled plenty
before, & especially when I tickled your neck
while cuddling in bed, which of course
I just did, given our setting,
the setup, but this was something else, this
was a huge glee gong
gonging strong. & it continued, then passed
 a certain point of plausible, & they
were so textbook cutie-pie, your giggles,
without any ragged
running out of proverbial steam or literal breath
that I had to ask, Are you doing a bit,
& then, Are you okay, when you just kept giggling,
Wait, are you okay, & you just nodded while giggling on,
on & on my ears were kissed
by the bubbliest song
seemingly about & in the form
of infinity.





How much more,
I wondered, how much longer, your jolly eternity,
& could I live there, too?
I didn't want it to end, didn't want you to stop,
don't stop, don't die,
don't die, don't die, don't.
That was the song
I sang in secret.
Though probably you heard some of it
in the way my hand went back
the second the gigglefest seemed to wane, my
fingers
had to find again that somehow
new spot on your neck.

Our Love

By Betty S. Chapau

The morning sunlight glistens upon your face
A peaceful slumber through the call of the chauka
As the morning fishermen go out at sea
“Mandra-lao awian!” greets the spirits of the ocean
Oh to exist in this bliss is my notion
I use to envy people who found love early in life
Until you showed me infinity between moments
And ours could never be measured by time
I could lay in the warmth of your body forever
I find comfort in the roughness of your palms
For life has seasoned you well
I no longer fear the future
For the first time my heart can dance
As the setting sun brings the fishermen home
Radiating this glow from our embrace
I promise to slow this dance with you
Through all the hues of life



Romance

By Arthur Rimbaud
(Translated from French by Oliver Bernard)

I

When you are seventeen you aren't really serious.

- One fine evening, you've had enough of beer and lemonade,

And the rowdy cafes with their dazzling lights!

- You go walking beneath the green lime trees of the promenade.

The lime trees smell good on fine evenings in June!

The air is so soft sometimes, you close your eyelids;

The wind, full of sounds, - the town's not far away -

Carries odours of vines, and odours of beer...

II

- Then you see a very tiny rag

Of dark blue, framed by a small branch,

Pierced by an unlucky star which is melting away

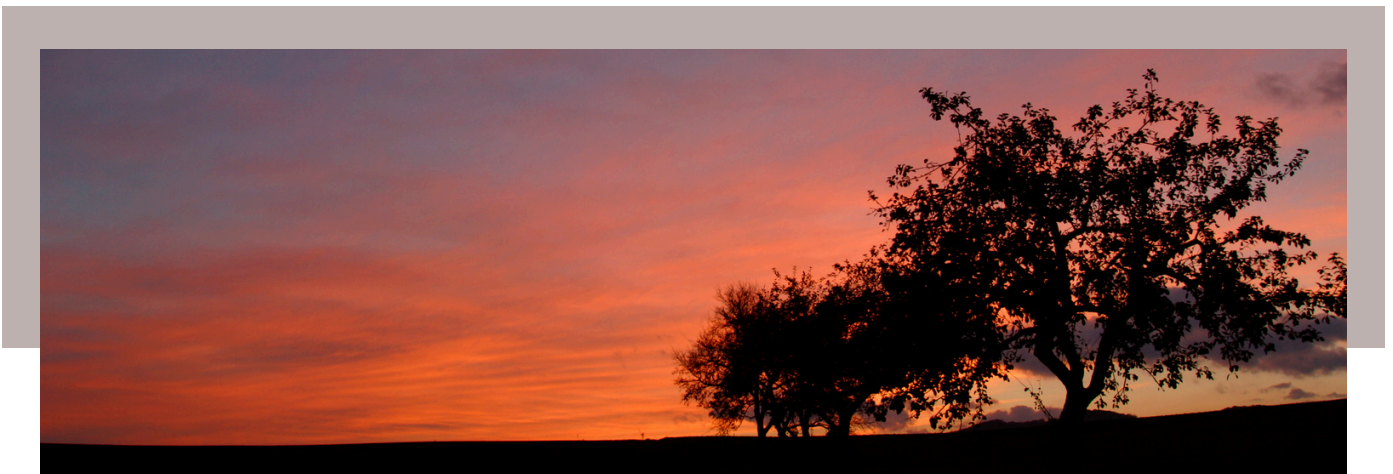
With soft little shivers, small, perfectly white...

June night! Seventeen! - You let yourself get drunk.

The sap is champagne and goes straight to your head...

You are wandering; you feel a kiss on your lips

Which quivers there like something small and alive...



III

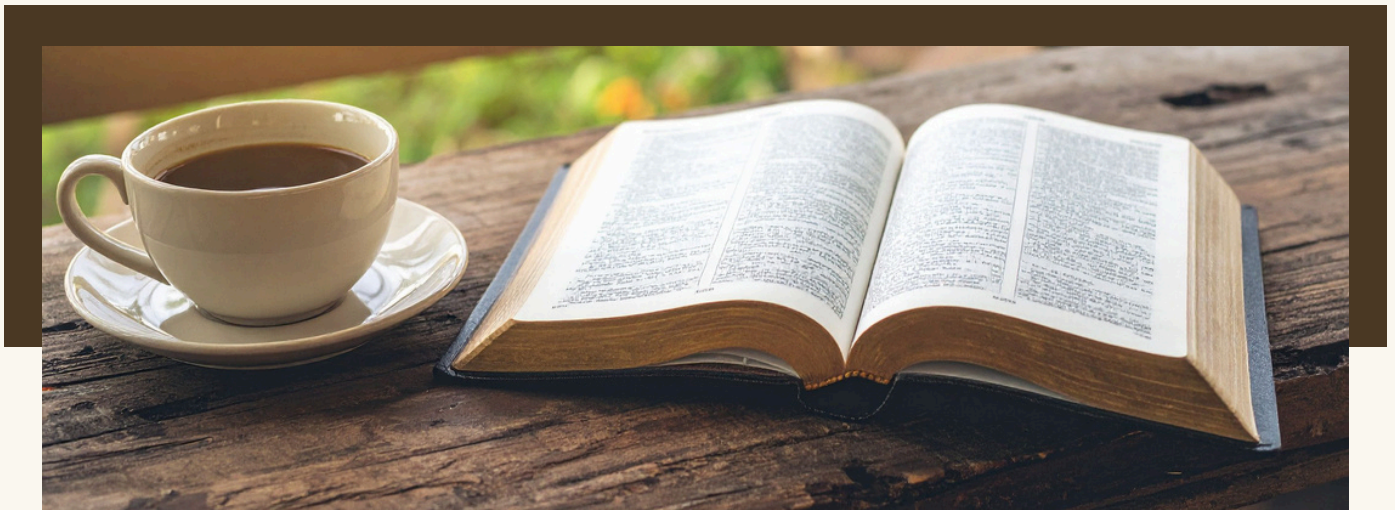
Your mad heart goes Crusoeing through all the romances,
- When, under the light of a pale street lamp,
Passes a young girl with charming little airs,
In the shadow of her father's terrifying stiff collar...

And because you strike her as absurdly naïf,
As she trots along in her little ankle boots,
She turns, wide awake, with a brisk movement...
And then cavatinas die on your lips...

IV

You're in love. Taken until the month of August.
You're in love - Your sonnets make Her laugh.
All your friends disappear, you are not quite the thing.
- Then your adored one, one evening, condescends to write to you...!

That evening,... —you go back again to the dazzling cafes,
You ask for beer or for lemonade...
- You are not really serious when you are seventeen
And there are green lime trees on the promenade...



31 ["He seems to me equal to gods"]

By Sappho (Translated from Greek by Anne Carson)

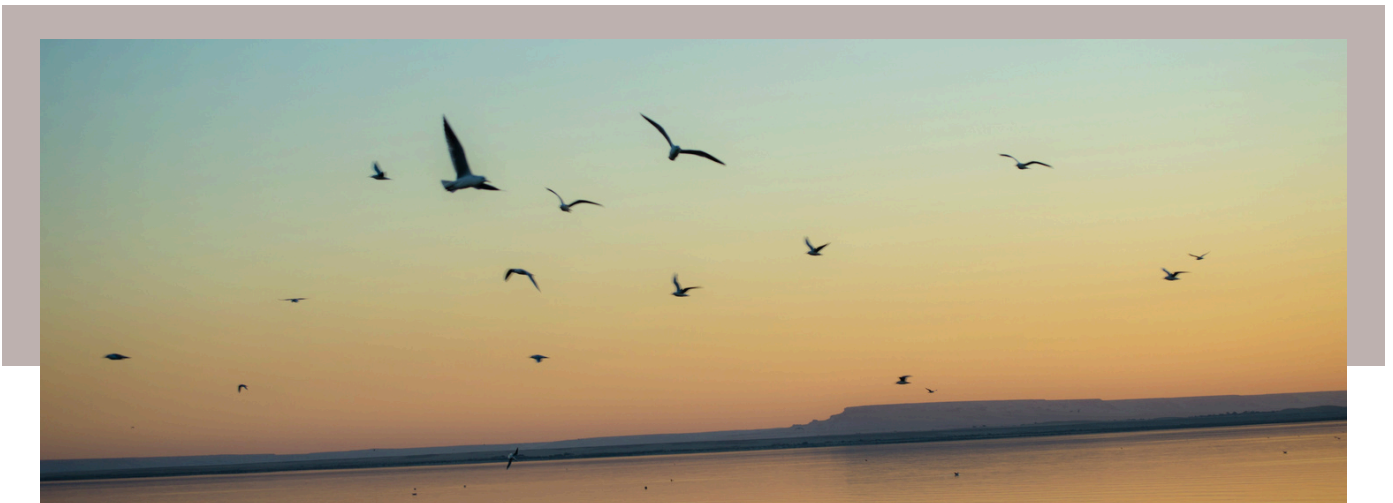
He seems to me equal to gods that man
whoever he is who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking

and lovely laughing—oh it
puts the heart in my chest on wings
for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking
is left in me

no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead—or almost
I seem to me.

But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty



If I Was a Love Poet

By Rudy Francisco

I'll be honest; I'm usually not really a love poet.

In fact, every time I try to write about love, my hands cramp
just to show me how painful love can be and sometimes,
pencils break just to prove that every now and then,
love takes a little more work than planned.

I'm not much of a love poet. But if I was to wake up
tomorrow morning and decide that I really wanted
to write about love, my first poem would be about you. About how
I loved you the same way that I learned how to ride a bike.
Scared, but reckless. With no training wheels or elbow pads
so my scars can tell the story of how I fell for you.

I'm not much of a love poet, but if I was, I'd write about how I see
your face in every cloud and your reflection in every window. I've
written a million poems, hoping that somehow, you'll jump out of
the page and be closer to me. Because if you were here right now, I
would massage your back until your skin sings songs
that your lips don't even know the words to.
Until your heartbeat sounds like my last name.
And you smile like the Pacific Ocean.
I want to drink the sunlight in your skin.



If I was a love poet, I'd write about how
you have the audacity to be beautiful
even on days when everything around you is ugly.
I'd write about your eyelashes, and how they are like
violin strings that play symphonies every time you blink.

If I was a love poet, I'd write about how I melt in front of you
like an ice sculpture every time I hear the vibration in your voice
and whenever I see your name on the caller ID, my heart plays
hopscotch inside of my chest. It climbs onto my ribs
like monkey bars and I feel like a child all over again.

I know this is going to sound weird, but sometimes,
I pray that God somehow turns you back into one of my ribs
just so I would never have to spend an entire day without you.
I swear, I'm usually not a love poet, but if I were to wake up
tomorrow morning and decide that I really want to write about
love, my first poem would be about you.





She Walks in Beauty

By Lord Byron
(George Gordon Byron)

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

To Go Lightly

By Ángela Hernández Núñez
(Translated from Spanish)

In innocence, eternity is possible.
But I have loved in haste,
with the attentiveness of objects that fly away.
I find myself saying, close the doors.
I find myself saying, love you ought to leave.
I find myself touching lines in the stone.
I think about the women who waited,
not for Ulysses, but for ordinary men.
Those who laid siege to cities,
beyond the great width
of their own hearts.
I have loved after and during the storm.
I carry a burden of light:
it turns the air to ashes.



Old Bones

By Misha Collins

This morning
The smell of bacon
Brought me downstairs
But before I reached
The open kitchen door
A voice stopped me
My mother telling
Her old, arthritic dog,
"I know sweetness
You've been carrying those bones
For a long time."
I leaned unseen
On the mildewed
Window sill
Watching her
Sip coffee
Fry Bacon
Her old dog
Pressing at her knee.



Wade in the Water

By Tracy K. Smith

One of the women greeted me.

I love you, she said. She didn't

Know me, but I believed her,

And a terrible new ache

Rolled over in my chest,

Like in a room where the drapes

Have been swept back. I love you,

I love you, as she continued

Down the hall past other strangers,

Each feeling pierced suddenly

By pillars of heavy light.

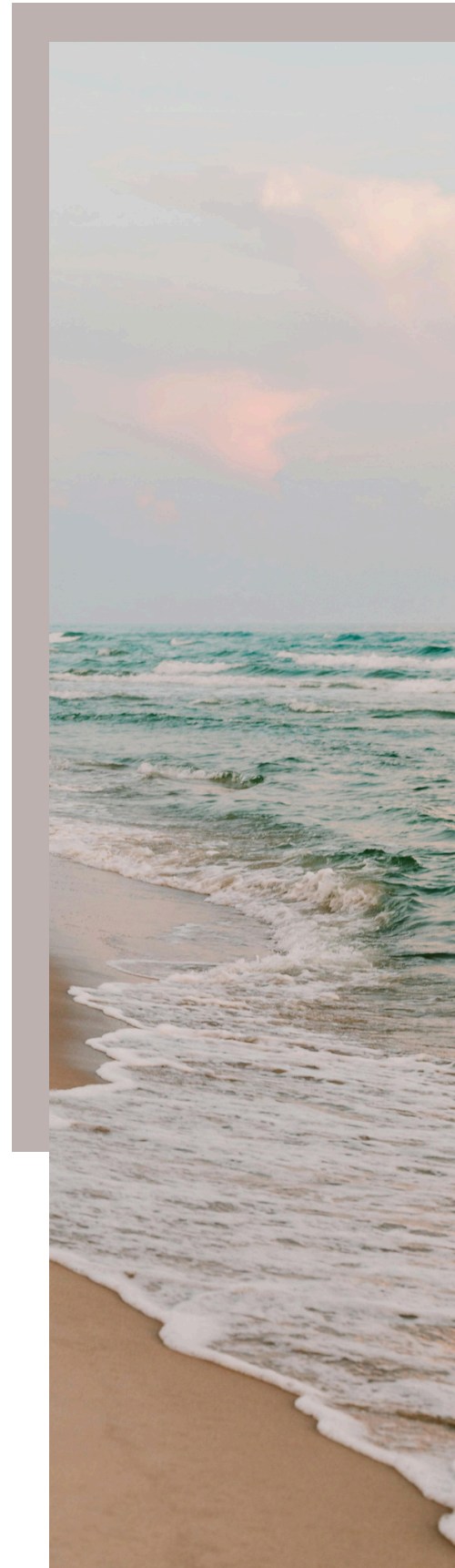
I love you, throughout

The performance, in every

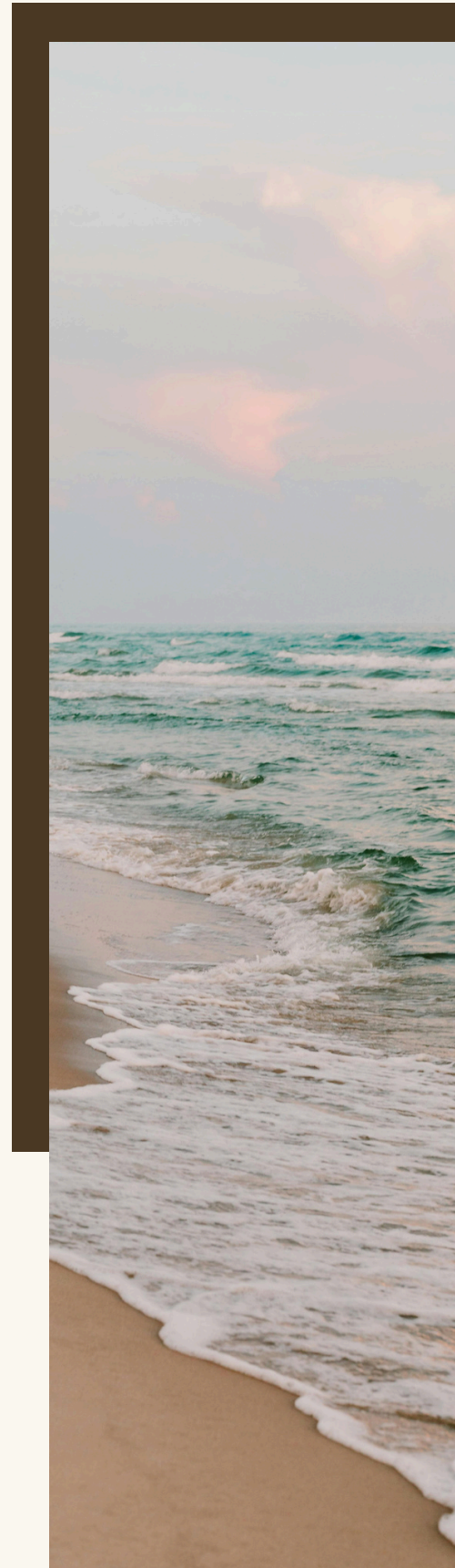
Handclap, every stomp.

I love you in the rusted iron

Chains someone was made



To drag until love let them be
Unclasped and left empty
In the center of the ring.
I love you in the water
Where they pretended to wade,
Singing that old blood-deep song
That dragged us to those banks
And cast us in. I love you,
The angles of it scraping at
Each throat, shouldering past
The swirling dust motes
In those beams of light
That whatever we now knew
We could let ourselves feel, knew
To climb. O Woods—O Dogs—
O Tree—O Gun—O Girl, run—
O Miraculous Many Gone—
O Lord—O Lord—O Lord—
Is this love the trouble you promised?





I Want to Eat Bugs with You Underground

By Julie Danho

The scientist on the radio said that humans
will survive, and, at first, I was buoyed,
but she meant only some of us, the ones
living in tunnels, eating crickets to survive
when the rest had died from mass starvation
after droughts lasted longer and seas rose faster
and wars killed bigger because everyone
wanted what little was left. I'd be fine
with being one of the billions dead unless
you were still alive. Under a down comforter
or by a trash fire, I want to be where
you are. You know how poorly I dig holes,
how angry I get when I'm cold, how twice
I've accidentally maced myself, and still
you'd take me with you down into the earth,
give me more than my fair share of caterpillar.
Few believe we're in the middle of the end
because ruin can happen as slowly as plaque
blocking arteries, and only later feels as true
as your hand resting on my hip, both of us
quiet as roses waiting for the bees to arrive.

When I Heard at the Close of the Day

By Walt Whitman

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had
been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a
happy night for me that follow'd,
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were
accomplish'd, still I was not happy,
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect
health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of
autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and
disappear in the morning light,
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing
bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun
rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on
his way coming, O then I was happy,
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food
nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at
evening came my friend,
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll
slowly continually up the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed
to me whispering to congratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same
cover in the cool night,
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was
inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast – and that night I
was happy.



How Poems are Made: A Discredited View

By Alice Walker

Letting go
In order to hold one
I gradually understand
How poems are made.

There is a place the fear must go.
There is a place the choice must go.
There is a place the loss must go.
The leftover love.
The love that spills out
Of the too full cup
And runs and hides
Its too full self
In shame.



I gradually comprehend
How poems are made.
To the upbeat flight of memories.
The flagged beats of the running
Heart.

I understand how poems are made.
They are the tears
That season the smile.
The stiff-neck laughter
That crowds the throat.
The leftover love.
I know how poems are made.

There is a place the loss must go.
There is a place the gain must go.
The leftover love.



[you fit into me]

By Margaret Atwood

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye

A Poem of Friendship

By Nikki Giovanni

We are not lovers
because of the love
we make
but the love
we have
We are not friends
because of the laughs
we spend
but the tears
we save

I don't want to be near you
for the thoughts we share
but the words we never have
to speak
I will never miss you
because of what we do
but what we are
together



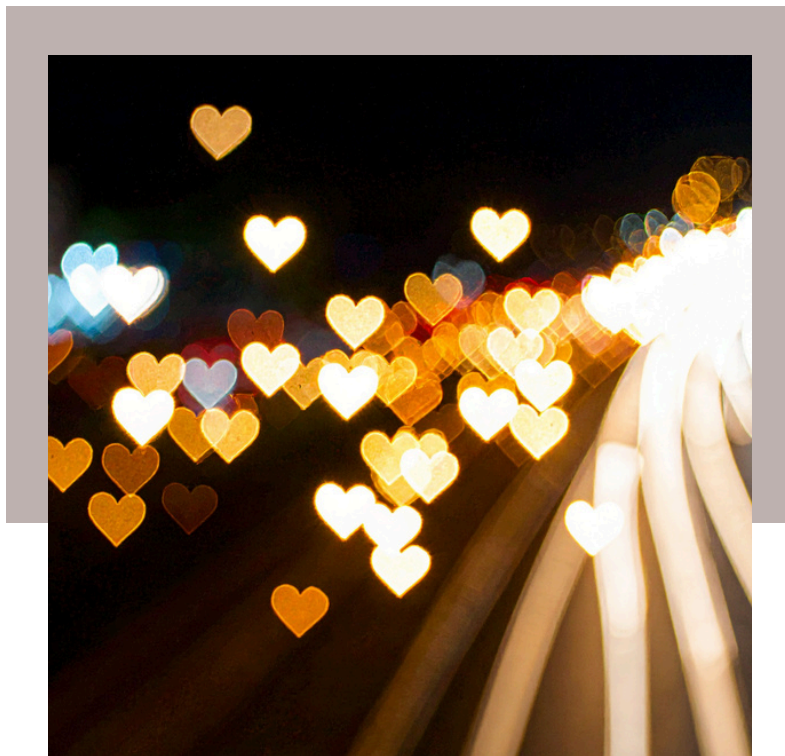
Shooting Star

By Daren Kamali

Tonight a shooting star
kissed my lips

Its bright spark
shone in my eyes
reflecting love
from the lover in me
My face could not hide
such vulnerability
connecting
affection through my writings
to reality

Tonight a shooting star
kissed my lips



Sonnet 54

By William Shakespeare

O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give.
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odor which doth in it live.
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumèd tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their maskèd buds discloses;
But, for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwooded and unrespected fade,
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made.
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall vade, by verse distils your truth.

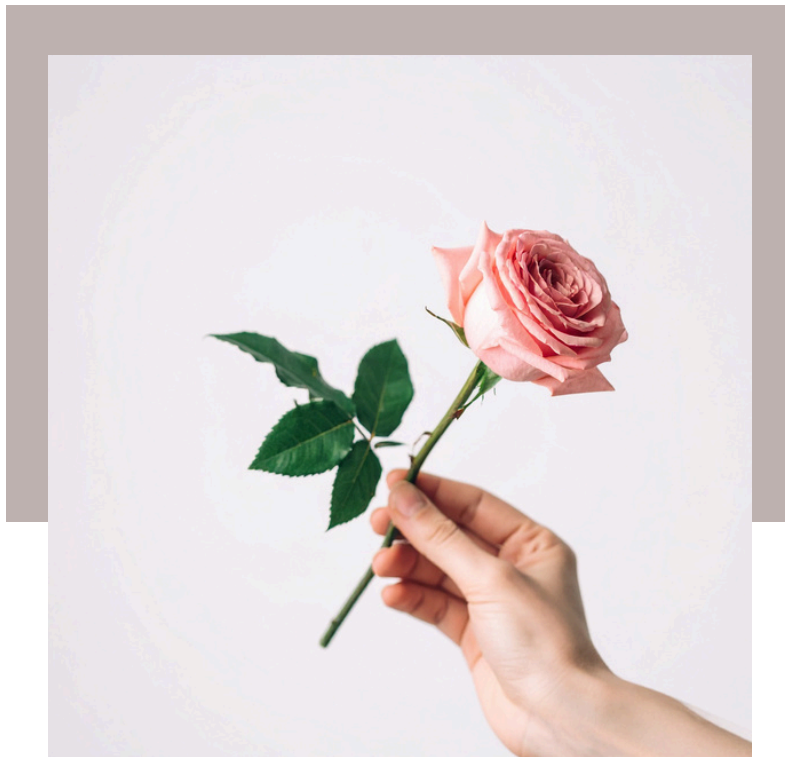


I Loved You

By Alexander Pushkin

(Translated from Russian)

I loved you: yet the love, maybe,
Has not extinguished in my heart;
But hence may not it trouble thee;
I do not want to make you sad.
I loved you hopelessly and mutely,
Now with shyness, now with jealousy being vexed;
I loved you so sincerely, so fondly,
Likewise may someone love you next.



To... (Kern)

By Alexander Pushkin

(Translated from Russian)

I still recall the wondrous moment
When you appeared before my eyes,
Just like a fleeting apparition,
Just like pure beauty's distillation.

When'er I languished in the throes of hopeless grief
Amid the troubles of life's vanity,
Your sweet voice lingered on in me,
Your dear face came to me in dreams.

Years passed. The raging, gusty storms
Dispersed my former reveries,
And I forgot your tender voice,
Your features so divine.

In exile, in confinement's gloom,
My uneventful days wore on,
Bereft of awe and inspiration
Bereft of tears, of life, of love.

My soul awakened once again:
And once again you came to me,
Just like a fleeting apparition
Just like pure beauty's distillation.

My heart again resounds in rapture,
Within it once again arise
Feelings of awe and inspiration,
Of life itself, of tears, and love.



Love's Philosophy

By Percy Bysshe Shelley

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?—

See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?





[Por encontrar un beso tuyo]

By Federico García Lorca

Por encontrar un beso tuyo,
¿qué daría yo?
¡Un beso errante de tu boca
muerta para el amor!
(Tierra de sombra
come mi boca.)
Por contemplar tus ojos negros,
¿qué daría yo?
¡Auroras de carbunclos irisados
abiertas frente a Dios!
(Las estrellas los cegaron
una mañana de mayo.)
Y por besar tus muslos castos,
¿qué daría yo?
(Cristal de rosa primitiva,
sedimento de sol.)

[To find a kiss of yours]

By Federico García Lorca
(Translated from Spanish
by Sarah Arvio)

To find a kiss of yours
what would I give
A kiss that strayed from your lips
dead to love
My lips taste
the dirt of shadows
To gaze at your dark eyes
what would I give
Dawns of rainbow garnet
fanning open before God—
The stars blinded them
one morning in May
And to kiss your pure thighs
what would I give
Raw rose crystal
sediment of the sun



Gifts

By Oodgeroo Noonuccal

I will bring you love, said the young lover,
A glad light to dance in your dark eye.
Pendants I will bring of the white bone,
And gay parrot feathers to deck your hair.
But she only shook her head.

I will put a child in your arms, he said,
Will be a great headman, great rain-maker.
I will make remembered songs about you
That all the tribes in all the wandering camps
Will sing for ever.

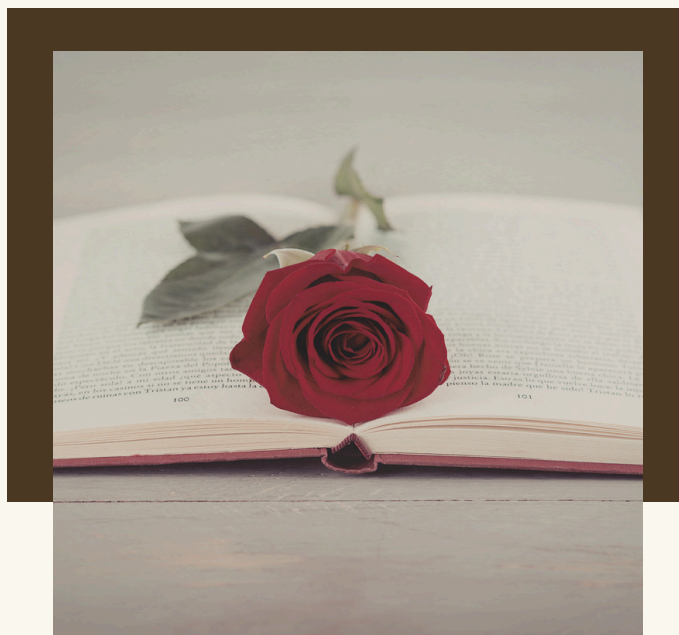
But she was not impressed.
I will bring you the still moonlight on the lagoon,
And steal for you the singing of all the birds;
I will bring down the stars of heaven to you,
And put the bright rainbow into your hand.
No, she said, bring me tree-grubs.



Love Poem with Apologies for My Appearance

By Ada Limón

Sometimes, I think you get the worst
of me. The much-loved loose forest-green
sweatpants, the long bra-less days, hair
knotted and uncivilized, a shadowed brow
where the devilish thoughts do their hoofed
dance on the brain. I'd like to say this means
I love you, the stained white cotton T-shirt,
the tears, pistachio shells, the mess of orange
peels on my desk, but it's different than that.
I move in this house with you, the way I move
in my mind, unencumbered by beauty's cage.
I do like I do in the tall grass, more animal-me
than much else. I'm wrong, it is that I love you,
but it's more that when you say it back, lights
out, a cold wind through curtains, for maybe
the first time in my life, I believe it.



This is Just to Say

By William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold





The Good-Morrow

By John Donne

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp north, without declining west?
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

इकरार / Acceptance

By Ashu Agarwal

(Tranlated from Hindi)

माना कि इकरार
मोहब्बत का दस्तूर है
मगर
ज़िद ना कीजिए
इंतज़ार उनका
चाँद ढलने तक उनसे बाते
इसी को इकरार समझ लीजिए
झुकती निगाहों
में है एक चेहरा
बस निगाहे उठाने की
ज़िद ना कीजिए
माथे पर पसीना
कापती उँगलिया

धड़कता दिल ही सही
मगर जाने की
ज़िद ना कीजिए
लौटते कदमों
मायूस नज़रों को
वापस लौटने का
वादा तो दीजिए

I know how important it is
to say I love you
when love is certain,
but please—
don't ask me to speak it aloud.
If I wait for you,
if I long to talk until dawn
as the night listens in—
call that love.
If you find your reflection
trembling in my eyes,
let that be my love.
When my heart grows restless,
when my breath turns shy
whenever you are near,
it is only love learning my name.
Please don't say you are leaving.
I already feel the ache of your absence.
Before you go,
leave me a promise—
quiet, gentle, true—
that you will return
soon.



The Sound of a Silver Bridle

By Begziin Yavuuhulan

(Translated from Mongolian by Simon Wickham-Smith)

I'm waiting for my lover to arrive,
the sound of horses' hooves pressed upon my heart.

Outside, the night is soundless, peaceful, and
the moon lights up the rafters.

Sleep has fled and, on my orphaned pillow,
I am snared by lovesickness.

And the dull sound of a silver bridle
brings happiness to my passionate heart.



Dos Cuerpos / Two Bodies

By Octavio Paz (Translated from Spanish by Muriel Rukeyser)

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces dos olas
y la noche es océano.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces dos piedras
y la noche desierto.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces raíces
en la noche enlazadas.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces navajas
y la noche relámpago.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son dos astros que caen
en un cielo vacío.

Two bodies face to face
Are at times two waves
And the night is an ocean.

Two bodies face to face
Are sometimes two stones
And the night a desert.

Two bodies face to face
Are at times two roots
Intertwined in the night.

Two bodies face to face
Are sometimes two stilettos
And night lightening sparks.

Two bodies face to face
Are two stars who are falling
In a naked sky.



While the Child Sleeps, Sonya Undresses

By Ilya Kaminsky

She scrubs me until I spit
soapy water.

Pig, she smiles.

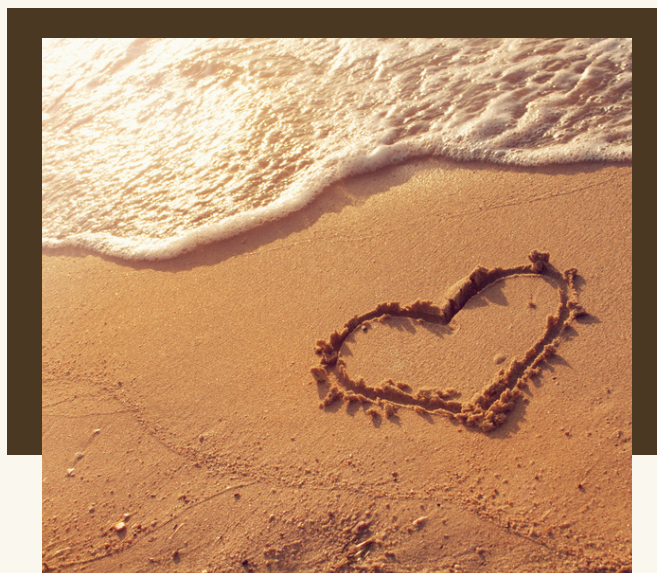
A man should smell better than his country—
such is the silence
of a woman who speaks against silence, knowing
silence moves us to speak.

She throws my shoes
and glasses in the air,
I am of deaf people
and I have

no country but a bathtub and an infant and a marriage bed!
Soaping together
is sacred to us.

Washing each other's shoulders.

You can fuck
anyone—but with whom can you sit
in water?



Palpar / Touch

By Octavio Paz (Translated from Spanish)

Mis manos
abren las cortinas de tu ser
te visten con otra desnudez
descubren los cuerpos de tu cuerpo
Mis manos
inventan otro cuerpo a tu cuerpo.

My hands
Open the curtains of your being
Clothe you in a further nudity
Uncover the bodies of your body
My hands
Invent another body for your body

Coda

By Octavio Paz (Translated from Spanish)

Tal vez amar es aprender
a caminar por este mundo.
Aprender a quedarnos quietos
como el tilo y la encina de la fábula.
Aprender a mirar.
Tu mirada es sembradora.
Plantó un árbol.
Yo hablo
porque tú meces los follajes.

Perhaps to love is to learn
to walk through this world.
To learn to be silent
like the oak and the linden of the fable.
To learn to see.
Your glance scattered seeds.
It planted a tree.
I talk
because you shake its leaves.



The Leaves are Late Falling

By Patti Smith

The leaves are late falling, the plane trees
gowned as to partner air.

Star to star, they hold fast in the cold
light filtering music.

Two hands ago these fingers were yours,
folding a guitar placed by our son

closing his eyes, a metronome pacing
the percussion of an errant wind

as the lid fastened, marking time,
year's mind and mind's end.

as the lid fastened, marking time,
year's mind and mind's end.

In a circle, on a rise, currents waltz
the restive plane,

their gowns loosening, they fall
one by one shimmering,

signing as their word
that somewhere you are good.



A Sunday Morning After a Saturday Night

By LoVerne Brown

She's so happy, this girl,
she's sending out sparks like a brush fire,
so lit with life
her eyes could beam airplanes through fog,
so warm with his loving
we could blacken our toast
on her forehead.

The phone rings
and she whispers to it
"I love you."
The cord uncoils
and leaps to tell him
she said it,
the receiver melts in her hand
as if done by Dalí,
the whole room crackles

and we at the breakfast table
smile
but at safe distance
having learned by living
that love so without insulation
can immolate more than the toast.



Valentine Verses

A Collection of Love Poetry Selected by SDPL Staff

Thank you for reading!



Poetry Collection
Arranged by Michael Ashman

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