

# Valentine Verses

A Collection of Love Poetry Selected by SDPL Staff



Poetry Collection  
Arranged by Michael Ashman

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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!



# A Red, Red Rose

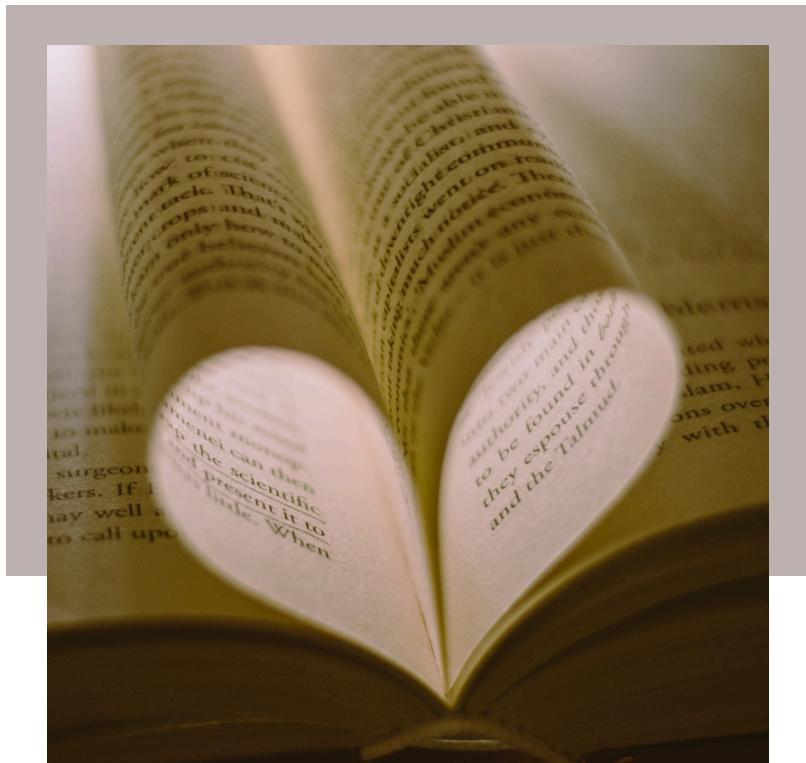
By Robert Burns

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

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luv am I;  
And I will luv 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 luv!  
And fare thee weel awhile!  
And I will come again, my luv,  
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!"

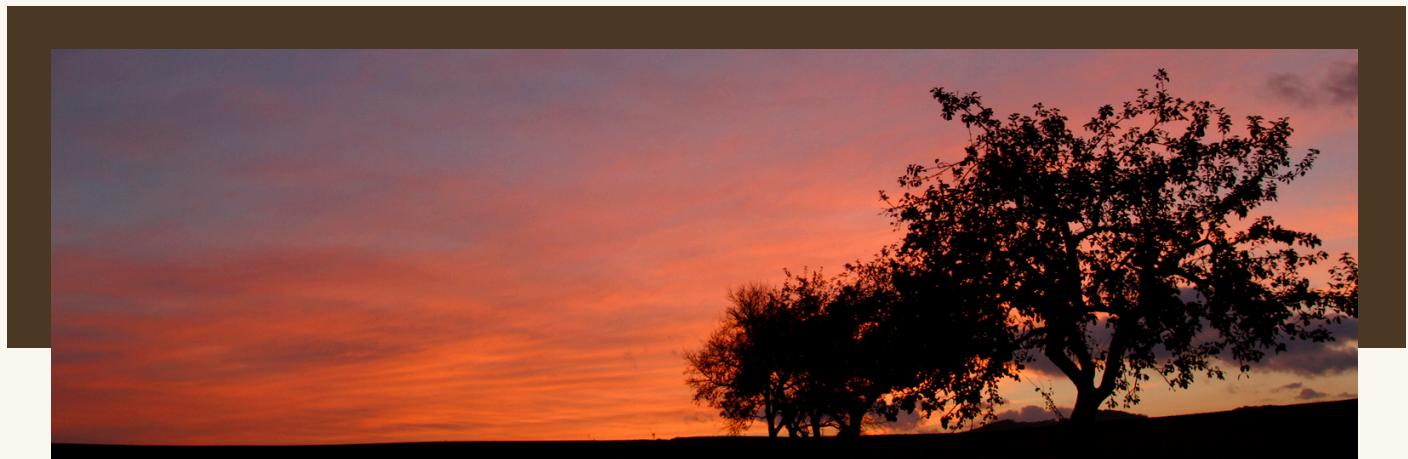
Out she swung — far out. The city seemed a speck of light below —  
There twixt heaven and earth suspended, as the bell swung to and fro.  
And the sexton at the bell-rope, old and deaf, heard not the bell,  
Sadly thought that twilight curfew rang young Basil's funeral knell.  
Still the maiden, clinging 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.



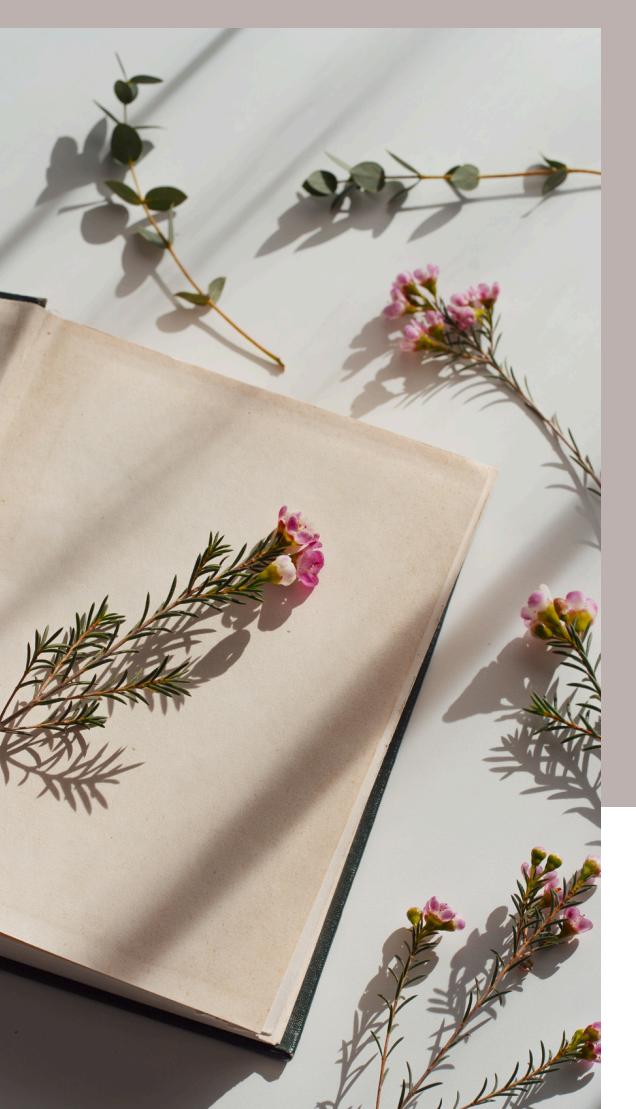
# That Time You Were Giggling, Giggling, Giggling

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 bubliest 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 used 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

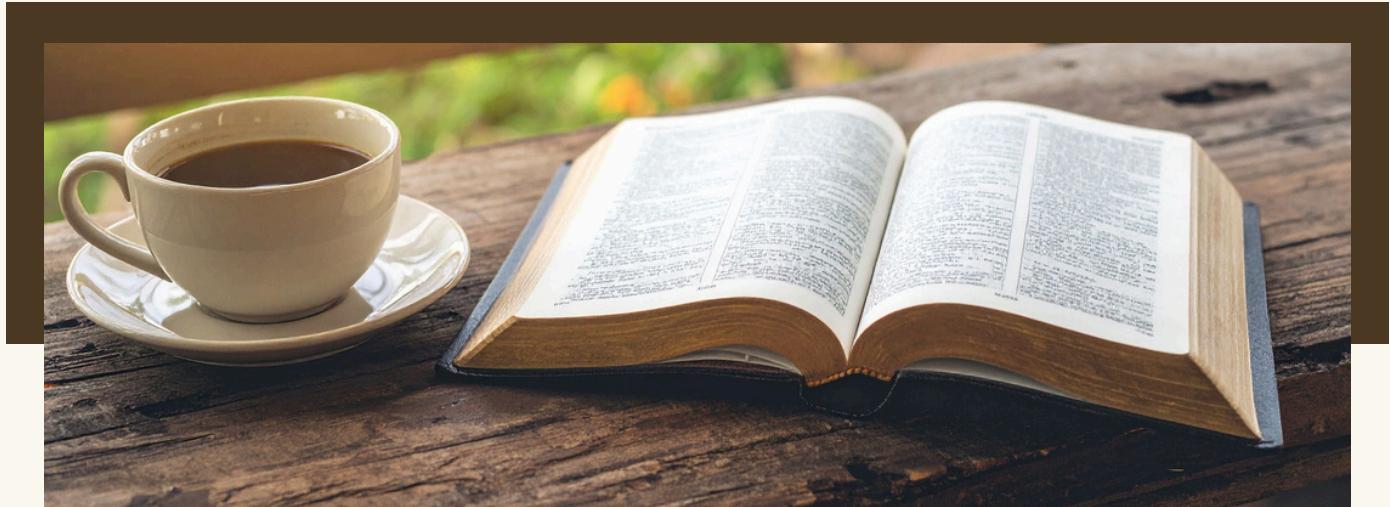
Your mad heart goes Crusoeing through all the romances,  
- When, under the light of a pale street lamp,  
Passes a young girl with charming little airs,  
In the shadow of her father's terrifying stiff collar...

And because you strike her as absurdly naif,  
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.

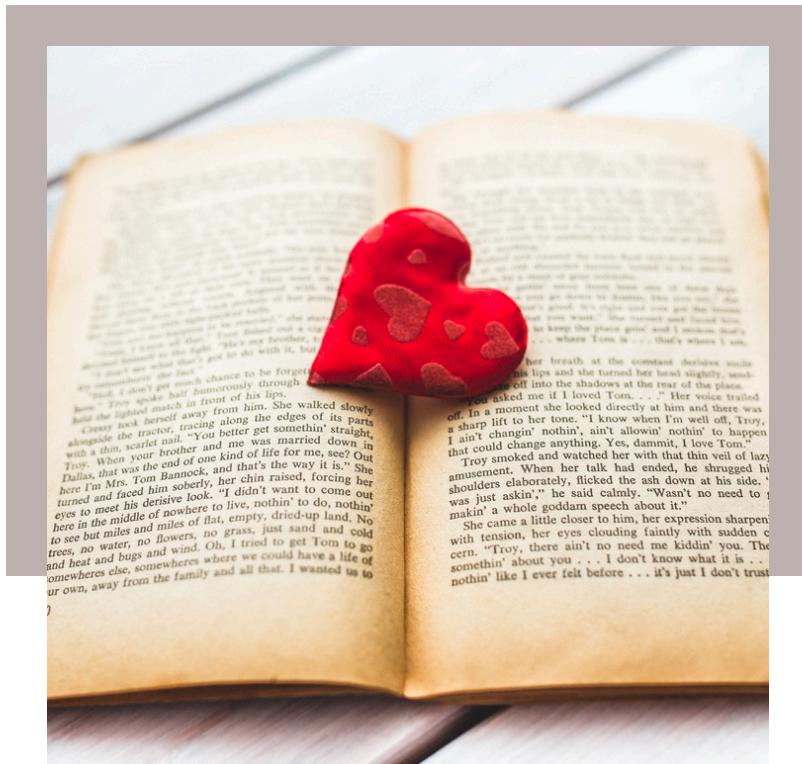
And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!



# To Go Lightly

By Ángela Hernández Núñez  
(Translated from Spanish)

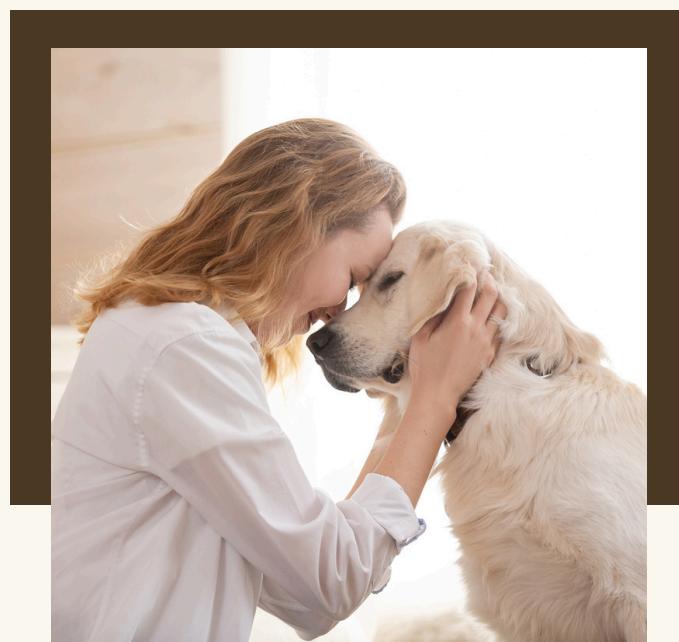
In innocence, eternity is possible.  
But I have loved in haste,  
with the attentiveness of objects that fly away.  
I find myself saying, close the doors.  
I find myself saying, love you ought to leave.  
I find myself touching lines in the stone.  
I think about the women who waited,  
not for Ulysses, 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 mildeweed  
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.

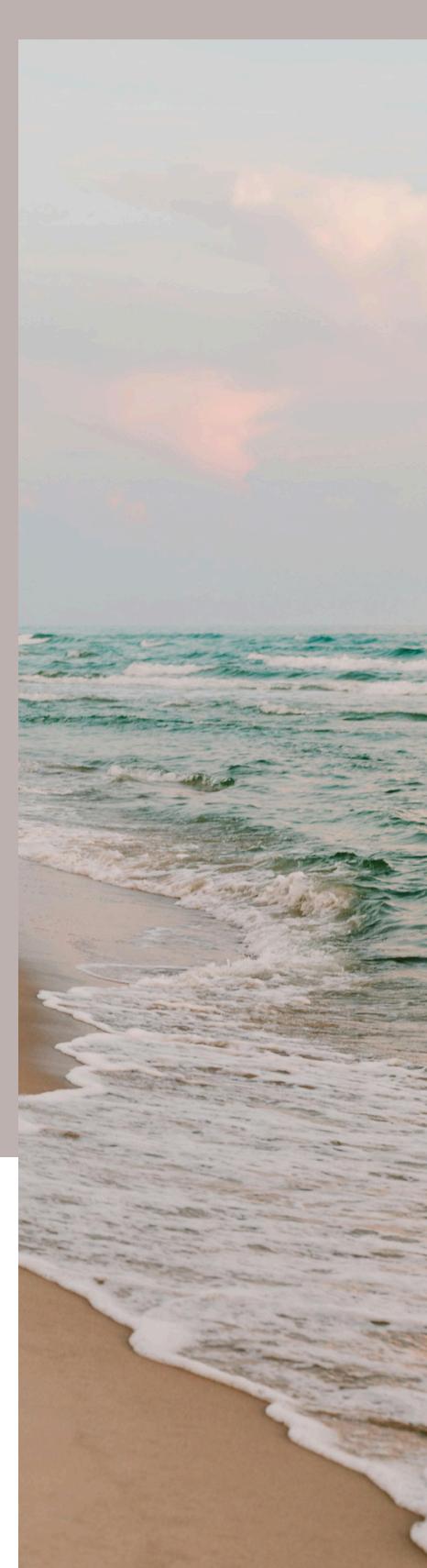
I love you, throughout

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

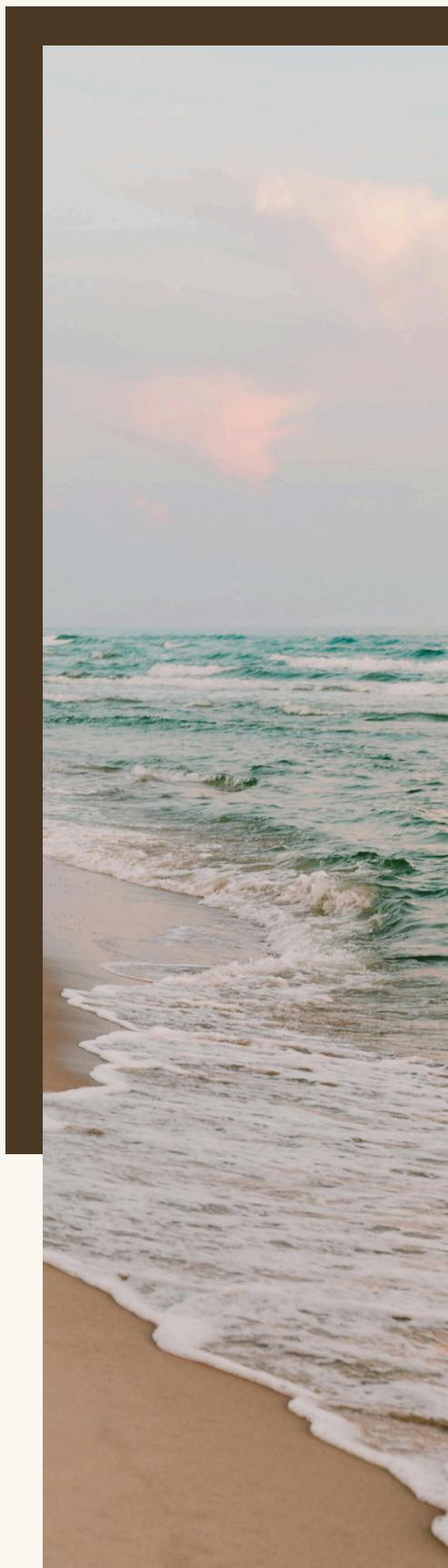
To climb. O Woods—O Dogs—

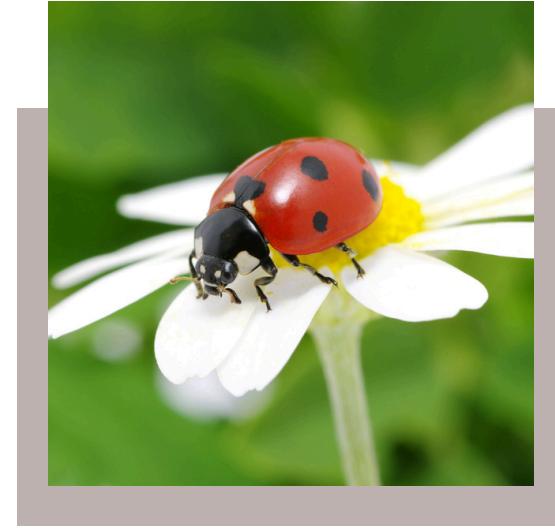
O Tree—O Gun—O Girl, run—

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 sunrise,  
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



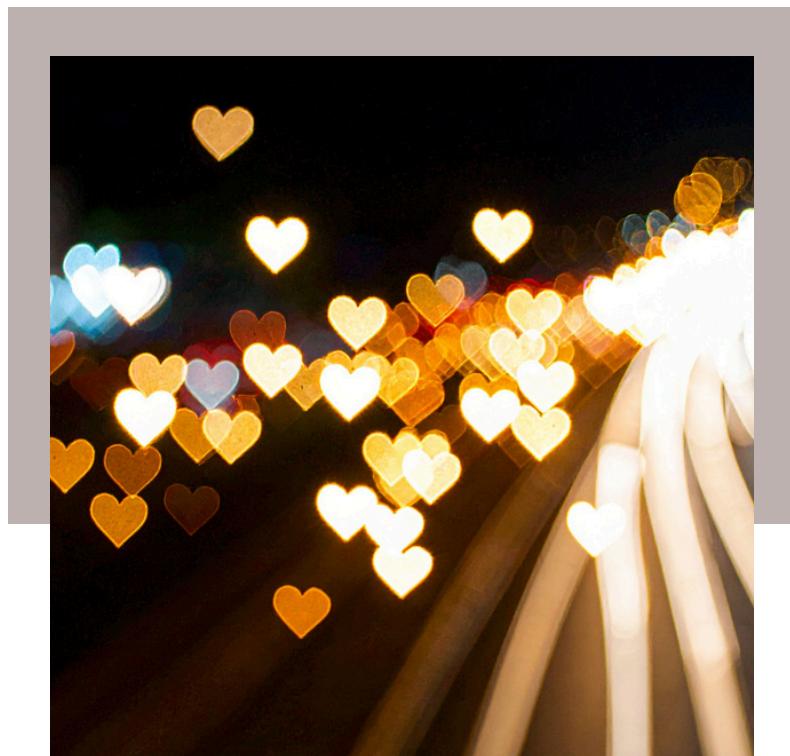
# Shooting Star

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

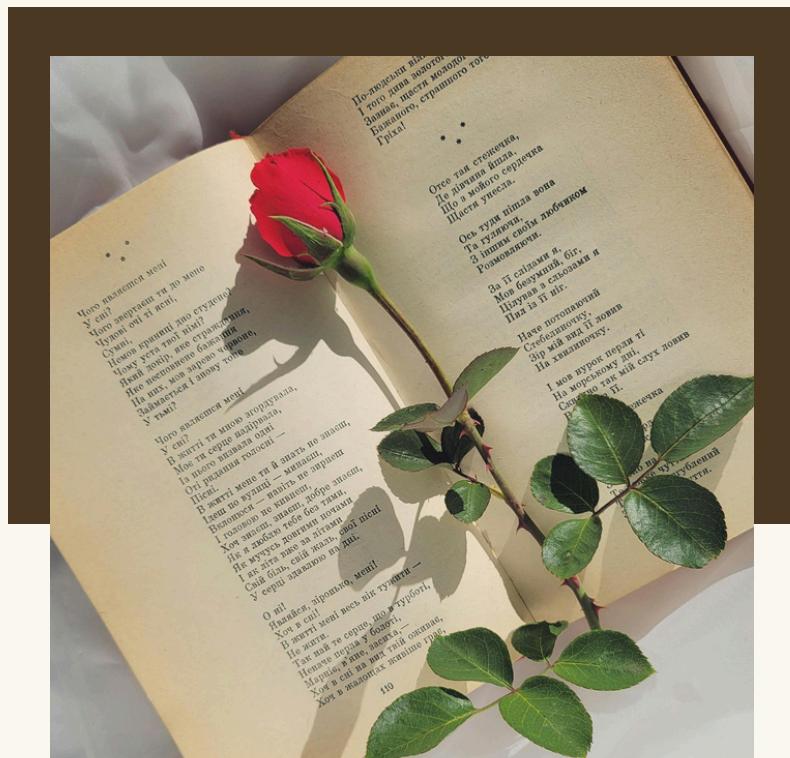
Tonight a shooting star  
kissed my lips



# Sonnet 54

By William Shakespeare

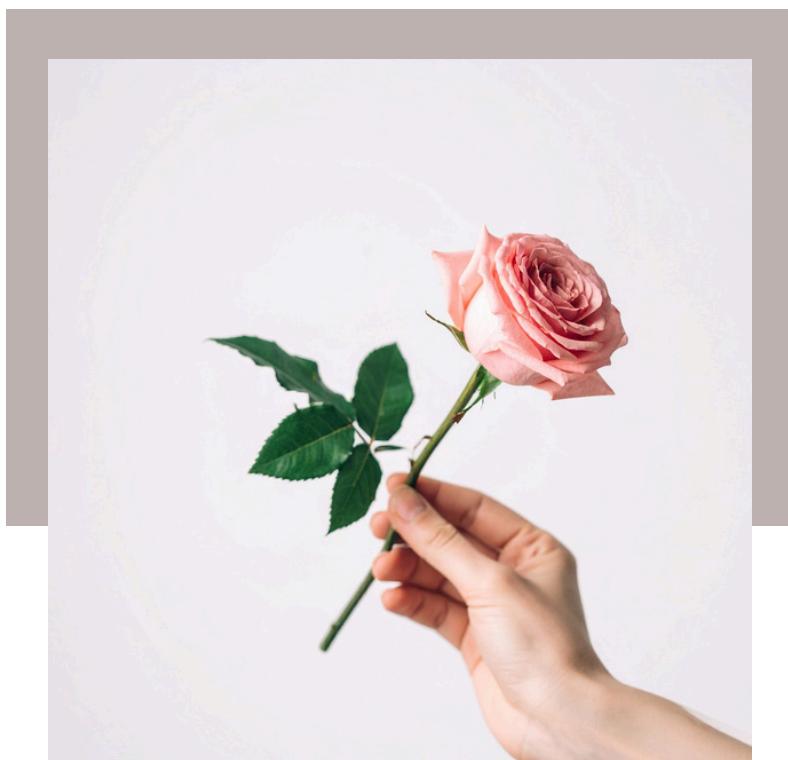
O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give.  
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem  
For that sweet odor which doth in it live.  
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye  
As the perfumèd tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly  
When summer's breath their maskèd buds discloses;  
But, for their virtue only is their show,  
They live unwooed 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.

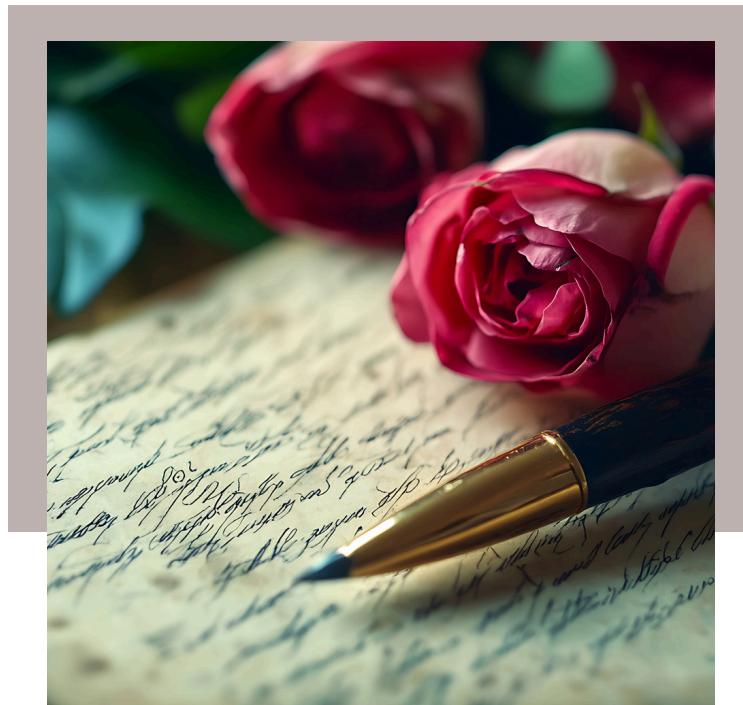


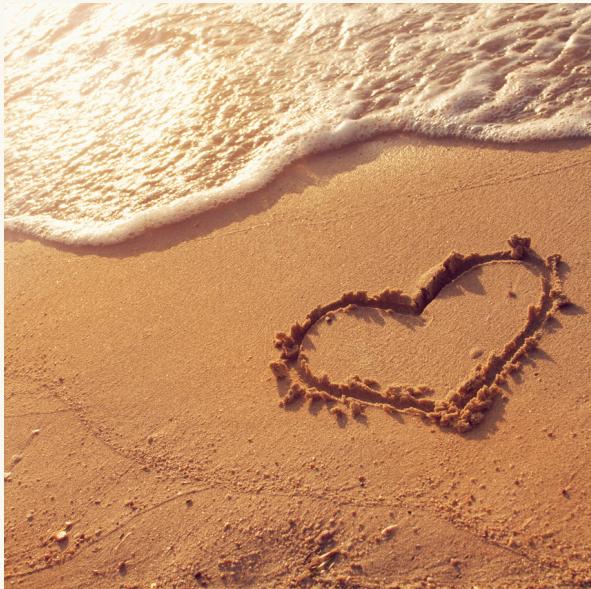
# Love's Philosophy

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.)

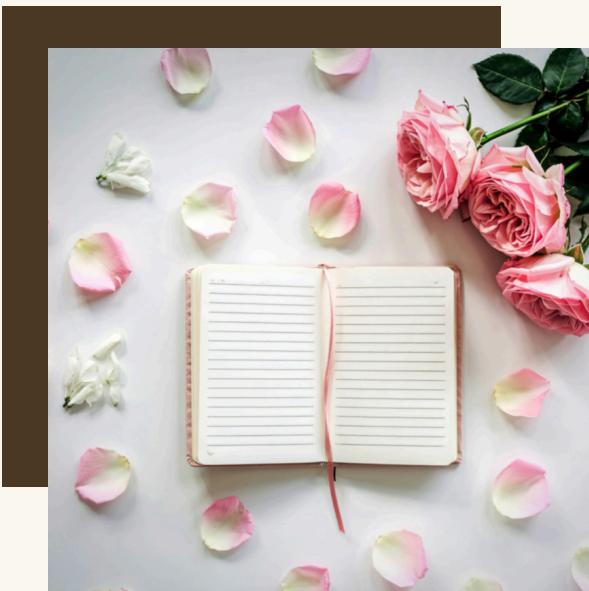
Y por besar tus muslos castos,  
¿qué daría yo?

(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

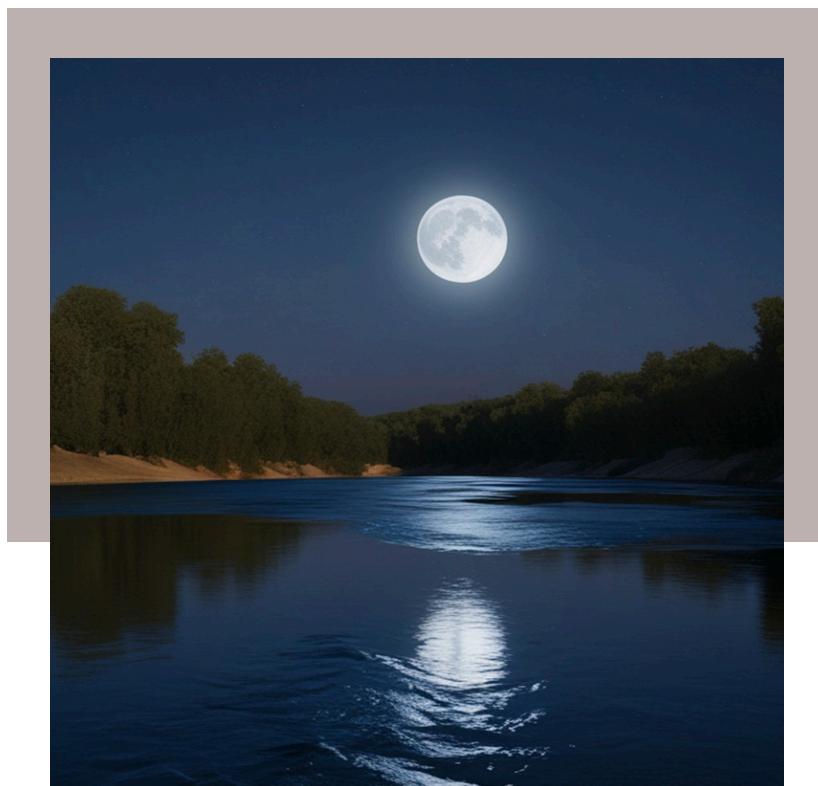
By Oodgeroo Noonuccal

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.

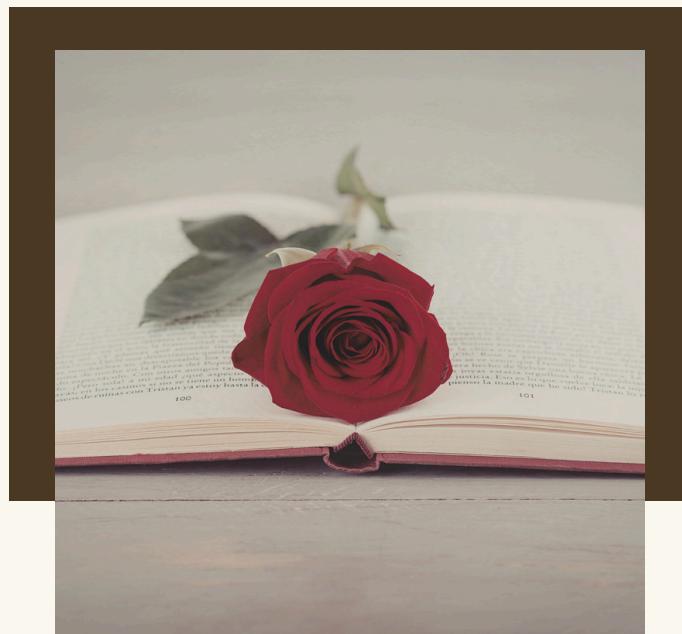
I will bring you the still moonlight on the lagoon,  
And steal for you the singing of all the birds;  
I will bring down the stars of heaven to you,  
And put the bright rainbow into your hand.  
No, she said, bring me tree-grubs.



# 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 hooved 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.



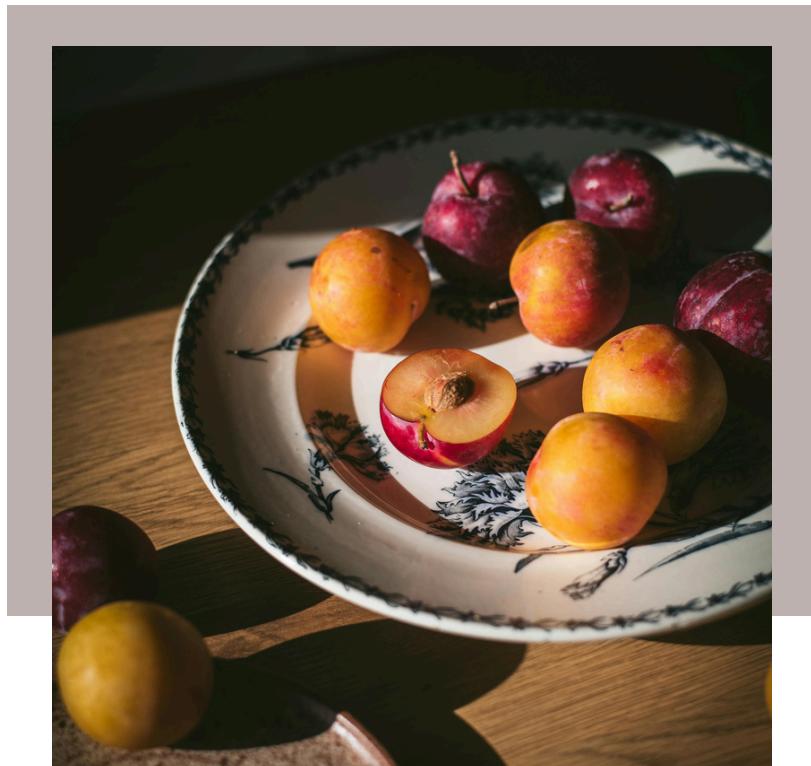
# This is Just to Say

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

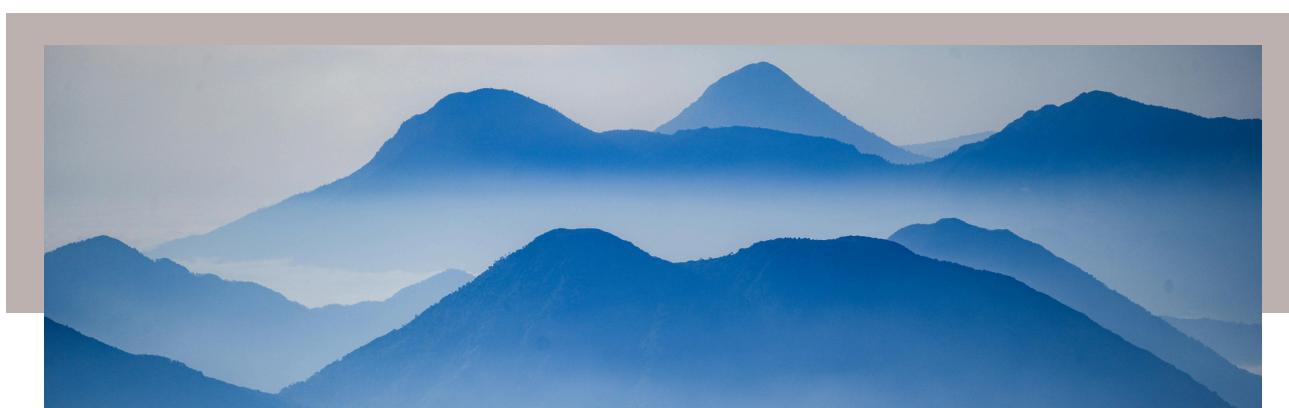
By Ashu Agarwal

(Translated 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 Yavuuhan

(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.

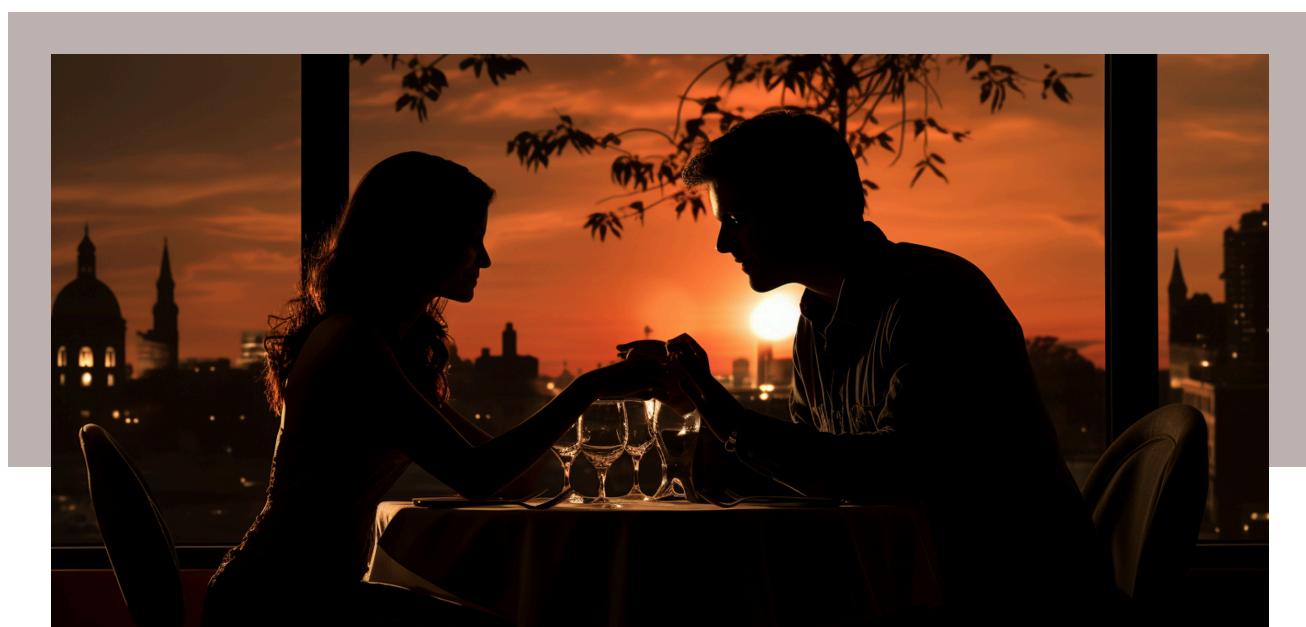
Two bodies face to face  
Are at times two waves  
And the night is an ocean.

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.

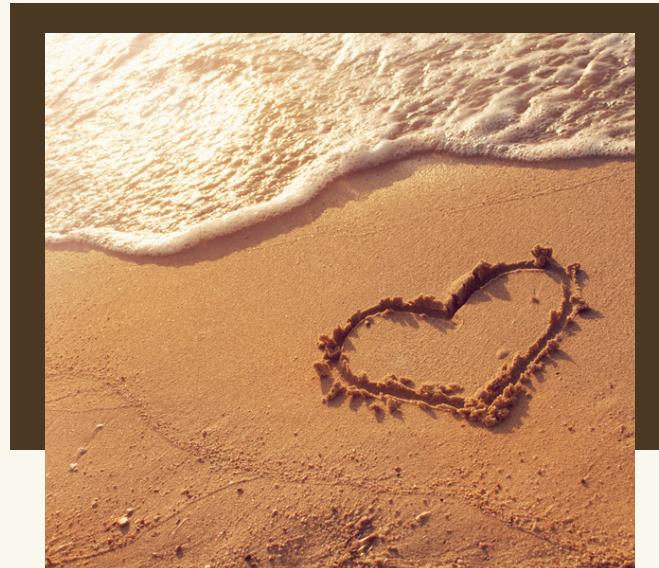
Pig, she smiles.

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.

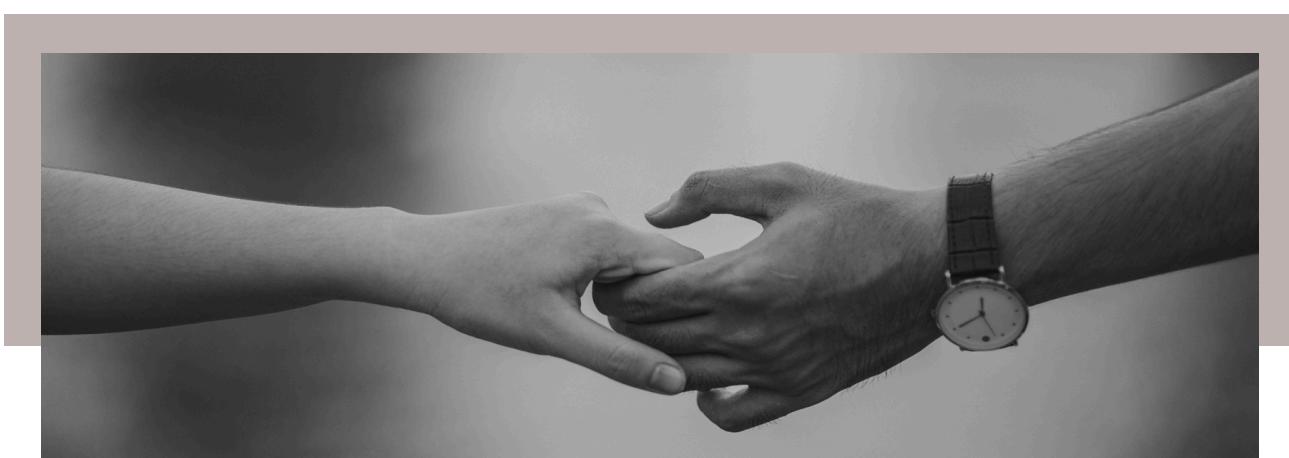
My hands  
Open the curtains of your being  
Clothe you in a further nudity  
Uncover the bodies of your body  
My hands  
Invent another body for your body

# 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

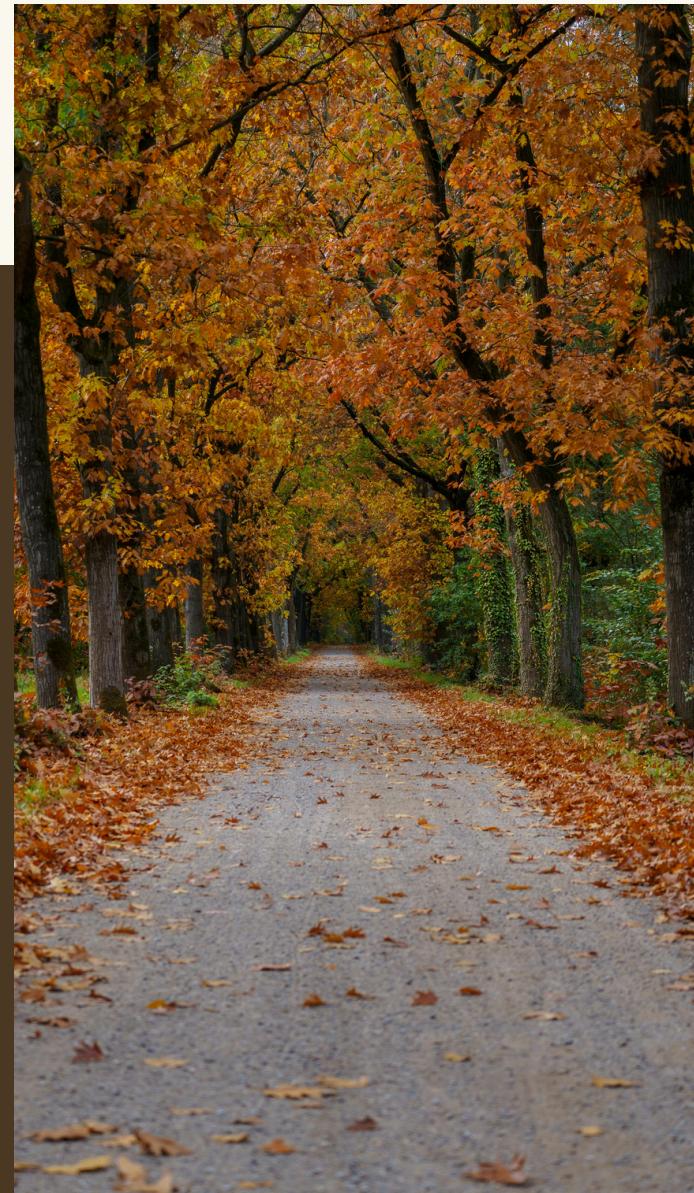
as the lid fastened, marking time, year's mind and mind's end.

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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