

POEMS OF LOVE AND LOSS

A Collection of Poetry

by Courtenay Young

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DESIRES

**I long for peace, for rest,
For love and for serenity
For warm fires and buttered toast for tea
Surrounded by the family.
I'd like to dive, to fly, to sail, to climb, to race,
To be able to shoot a bow
Accurately into the target with a whistling thud.
And I'd like to be able to sit quietly
And watch a mighty glacier flow.
I like watching avocets wading across the mud-flats
And a marsh-harrier floating above the reeds.
I want to complete the Times crossword
Once before my egg is lightly boiled
And quote Shakespeare easily.
One of my needs is for time in wilderness
That no-one else has touched or spoiled.
The twinkling gleam of far-bright stars
On a crystal clear night
Whilst watching the slow passage
Of a satellite, fills me with peace sublime.
I like nights too which are full of wind and rain.
When I am cosy, safe beside the fire,
The storm can batter at my window pane.
One of my desires is simple but so difficult to find.
A friend. Someone I can talk to gently, passionately,
Earnestly, to unwind with
From some of my problematic toils.
Someone to curl up with occasionally
Or to spoil and treat with gifts and extravagance.
Someone who will be there for me at the very end.
Someone with whom I can perform Life's dance.**

ALWAYS

**The words repeat again
An endless whisper through the years
Marking time's passage with its constant murmur.
It will never cease.
It says, "I love you."
Even after all has died
This will be left
And through the darkness
You will hear the words,
"I love you."
Pause a while
While the impact
 sinks deep into your spirit.
The stars pass.
The message goes on
 throughout eternity.
"I love you."
Wait. Hear again.
"I love you."
And even if the message were to stop
You would hear the echo
When you listen;
 there !
"I love you."
This day, this year, this life and always.**

DON'T FEAR THE DARK

**Let yourself drown in that well of despair
Sink deep down. let the tears that are there
Swell and run, melt and flow.
I still will be there. Let them go.**

**Don't run away in panic or flight.
Don't take fright at the pain. In the night,
When the darkness comes round
And the gloom presses down,
I'll be there holding you tight.**

**Let the sadness be there, the emptiness too.
Let the pain wash you through & your doom come anew.
Embrace all the fear. Let the horror come near.
I'll be there, helping you see it all through.**

DELIGHTS

**I cannot constantly spread a cornucopia
for you of expensive delicacies
across your white damask tablecloth;
But I can pour a cascade of vibrant poetry
over your head & shoulders
in a light shower of effervescent rain.**

**I cannot deck you, like some of your other lovers can,
in silks & expensive furs so that
you can luxuriate in my affluent adoration.
The things that I give you to caress sensually
are just words and rhymes,
spells which if you let them touch you
will make you swell and bloom again
in their warm radiance.**

**So let me whisper sweet syllables into your secret places
and let honied words drip off my tongue.
These are the rich and tender outpourings of my heart
and, if neglected can either fade and wither
fast & brown like old rose petals in a bowl,
Or, if you let them gently seep within,
can regenerate our love,
depleted by the summer past
so that it can bloom anew
Into glorious abundance that will rival nature's harvest
and others will yearn to be included
into our rich and glowing aura.**

DREAM ON

**Dream on, my sweet and sleeping love,
Dream on, all curled up foetus-like
 inside my circling arms.
Dream on and let my warmth and love
 flow into those dark wells.
Dream on and let the daemons dwelling deep inside
 ride free. Let them rip, let them tear.
For I am here. I am quite strong
 and they will not harm me.
Whatever you do you cannot destroy
 the feelings I have for you.
For you are fair and beautiful, my love.
 Solomon wrote songs for such as you.
You are wise and deep and honest too.
 These are my safeguards. These replenish my soul.
Your daemons and the dark destructive path will sometime go
 And then you will be whole - and I'll be here.
Dream on.**

JUST WORDS

**These are just words and can't convey
 how my heart melts to your slight touch
 like butter in the warm sunlight.
These are not the words I want to use
 (for I do not want to use words)
 when I nourish you & feed you soft clams
 or deck you with flowers
 or play sweet games by the flickering firelight.
How can words transmit the depth of tenderness
 that caresses your skin like windblown pollen
 leaving it luminous in the night.
You are sick of words which hold empty promises
 or broken dreams; words that carry weights.
These stain the space around us like berry-juice on white silk.
Will they wash out or will we bury our hopes in a tawdry shroud ?

There are no words to tell of how it felt when that knife
 slipped sharp into my soft insides. First panic, numbness,
 then disbelief, when you said you want to part.
These are not words that spill across this page
 but the spilt arterial blood of a loving heart.**

IF YOU COULD REALLY SEE ME

**If you could really see me as I really am,
without the masks behind which I hide to protect myself
And without the distortions with which you protect yourself
from what is really there,
You would not recognise me from the person you know
and you would know me.**

**You would know that I love the fragrant beauty of trees;
they touch my soul somewhere like a brother or sister.
The angularity of twigs, sharp smells of resin, the gentle fronds of leaf & the
heavy fatness of nut, fruit & berry all speak to me.
You would know also of when I have cut down such trees with an
unfeeling chain-saw just to improve a view.**

**If you could really see me you would know of how often
I have lied, stole or cheated; mainly from strangers.
There is a callousness and indifference that I have used to justify these acts
within my mind. I do not really know them or you.
And you would know too of the generosity I have when what I have is
genuinely yours for the asking and my house is your house.**

**You would know too of the way in which I can be touched by Spirit;
that touch that lifts my spirit with an exquisite calm joy.
Sometimes that happens when we touch, or when I tell you of my Self
or sometimes when I am alone watching the sun set over the bay.
There is also a daemon inside of me that delights in strife,
with long gory fingernails that can rend and tear in twisted rage.**

**If you could see the Me that lies behind the pride & arrogance I use to cover
my fears, maybe you would not reject me so quickly.
If you could put aside your own fears of invasion & more clearly see
my fears of rejection, maybe you would come to realise that
I am not really the aggressor that you fear, for your fears and my fears
make it so that we can never really see each other.**

**If you could really see into the depths of my heart, you would know exactly
how much is true when I say that I love you.
If you look into the depths of your heart, you will know
whether what I really am is what you really want.**

THE GOLDEN WOMAN WITH TWO FACES

When she appears with glints of sunlight in her hair
Bluebells ring in the warm spring air
 with peals of gentle laughter
Larks sing high above the ripening barley
And autumn leaves drift into deep carpets of russet and amber.
I can see the flickering firelight shimmering on her skin
 as we keep out the cold on long dark evenings
Yet as I share these seasons of our dreams, I grow a little older
Daring to change myself from the greedy grub that drinks desire
 into a fairer butterfly that sips the pollenating flower
And glows a bit more golden then and there.

Yet she herself is a child afraid of being scorched up by the glaring sun
 or being hopelessly lost and dares not walk alone in deep woods.
Fairs and fine summer holidays, full of light and singing like a bird
 poorly prepares the soul
For the onset of winter and the depression that comes
 with wet winds, bare boughs and shortening days.
Seeking comfort with sugary things to eat adds weight
 and changes the delicate balance of her body.
It turns the nectar sour and the inner sweetness burns
 in the hidden clefts of skin.
So how does she now care for and welcome in the dream lover
 whom she wishes to dazzle with her sunny brilliance
And ensnare in soft nets of golden down-like kisses.

So how do we meet -
I who am not sensitive to all her fragilities for I see only beauty
 and this woman who likes wild flowers out of season

LITTLE FLOWER

Little flower, please do not hide your face
From me and the warm, soft summer sun;
Don't cover your petals so shyly,
The day's not yet fully done.
Do not fear my gaze. It is not avaricious
For I will not cut your slender stem -
No wish to do you harm,
Or keep you for a few sweet days
Upon the mantleshelf to grace a vase
In my sitting room so charmingly.
I would rather let you grow
So that your beauty blooms, then peaks,
Then fades and you live your full life's span
Unless it were truly destined so.
I speak the truth as best I can.
Why should I keep you to myself ?
For you were made to live and flower
In the grass of this emerald isle
So I might sit in this summer evening's sun
And watch your delicate glory for a little while
Wondering at the simple beauty of perfect nature.

SO I CRIED

You sat there in your chair
And quickly told me about when your mother died.
I sat there too - and cried.
I cried for all our impotence
That makes us grieve so painfully inside.
I cried for the little girl
So lonely long ago - who nearly died.
I cried because I couldn't hold you;
The gap just seemed so wide.
I cried for lack of words - there are no words
Besides these few that tell I lied;
I didn't say "I love you"
So I cried.

GENTLE STRENGTH

**Last night I showed my naked face
The inner man I often hide
And cover with a mask in place
Of things last night I did confide.**

**My fears and vulnerabilities
Some shame, some pain, some times I lied
My foible sensibilities
And the times I wish I'd sometimes died.**

**And now the mask itself does cower,
Exposed, condemned, its tricks belied.
The inner self grows stronger now
The gentle self, its strength untried.**

**That arrogance; the cutting sceptic knife
Of cynicism that all too many times I'd
Wield and damage others when in strife;
A shield against the inner critic deep inside.**

**No wonder now I find it hard to be a friend
And listen easily to others as I hide
The need from never feeling listened till the end.
There's a conflict there that needs to be untied.**

**The mask, the strength I used to feel
As hard protective armour as I strived
Against the world. I'm learning now to peel
And show a much more softer gentle side.**

**Each time I show these parts I fear
Will be so scorned or even criticised
My friends say that they feel so much more clear
With me; love feeds the parts I had so long denied.**

**I know too well from whence it came
The "normal" home where much was often well denied.
The absent father, present only to condemn
With the harsh and cutting discipline he justified -**

**As love. And now I know a better way to live.
I know the inner child will learn to love again.
As I find the resouce of my gentle strength, I give
Away the bitter mask that once was forged from pain.**

AUTUMN GOLD

When I arise with aching eyes
My staggering limbs go down the stair
My body craves continued sleep
By your warm side
And not to leave you there.

I do not want to wake to work
On such a day, to have to rise alone
With a bleary cup to warm the hands
By newlit coals
On this early winter's morn.

Each sip of tea scalds mouth & lip
And then the mewling cat's expelled into the cold
The freezing air through the open door
Brings sun on bricks
And a touch of autumn gold.

Back at the fire I think with desire
Of your heavy sleep last night upon my arm
And I send my thoughts all gentle now
Upstairs to bed
To quilt your sleeping form.

I silently sing with power that feeling brings
And pen the words for you when life is cold
A lasting song that when I'm gone
May reassure my love;
Love comes again with light and autumn gold.

TO A REDHEAD

A first impression, rising sun. It seems Aurora is the runner-up
For the richest copper lode gleams in your auburn hair.
The warmth of crackling fires glows as a halo round your head,
Each hair, a fine spun wire, is filled with the sparks of life.
The brightest ruby in a heap of coloured glass
Is likened to you walking in a crowd.
And when you scarf your hair, it is like the stopping of a drug;
For I, the addict, crave for just another glimpse
Of tangled tawny locks before I grow one hour more old.
Truly a cupric treasure; Worth its weight - in gold.

GOLDEN SHADOWS

**As we look at the golden shadows that lie in between us two
And try to change the patterns that distort the growth & flow of love
We find we can be friends, perhaps for long and true
As long as we can drop the needs we have, the past we've had
and listen to the voice of truth above.**

**The candle light made golden shadows flicker on your skin
It's silkiness so smooth, it glows
The very air became more sweet as you allowed me in
to your embracing arms
And when my tender words of vulnerability and care
brought tears into your eyes
The pain of the last year began to die along with fears
of doing each one some more harm.**

**At least I have some golden shadows now
of memory and sweetness shared
Of depth and growth and intimacy that we dared and chanced
to show increasingly unto each other.
The talking and the growing contact was as sweet
as when we paired between the sheets
Our minds and psyches mingled, turned and flowed
together as our shadows of our bodies danced.**

**The deeper darker shadows too were touched.
Our deeper pain was much reduced
As we began to trust and bring up from the past
the horrors and abuse into the healing light of day at last.
We were not used to such a strong degree
of exposed and naked intimacy
And so it was that once or twice it became so much a risk
that it was much easier to run away.**

**For all the pain I suffer now alone I know
that I can say that I prefer it so.
For we have done what we have done
and it was rich and golden too.
We have undone some fearful knots and now we are apart
can grow much more clear and true unto our hearts
The golden shadows hold behind their flickering play
a wealth of golden memories and
A chance we took to heal and grow together
though now not together on this sunny day of golden shadows.**

SHADOWS

**When we meet again, after so much pain,
And after so very long
Please be careful how you see me
For really I have changed.
I have not just rearranged my life
Being bereft around your absence,
Nor has my hair turned more grey
Just because you left and went away.**

**So when we talk about the future
Or as we begin to shape it there and then
Please be careful and aware to whom it is you talk
Or I can tell that once again
There'll be a chance we will begin to recreate
The song and dance of our relationship
That went so very wrong.**

**And please don't let your fears of anger once again
Begin to cloud your eyes or block your ears.
You fear the pain, I hear that well, but isn't really there.
Once again, please don't expect me just to be
The placid man I was, or who you want, or what you need of me.
That isn't really fair.**

**Do not project those monsters from your childhood;
Don't protect yourself from ogres of the woods which are not me,
So work them out, please, well away from here.
Don't bring them up and out or use them now
To play on fears or trepidations of abuse
For I am sure; I really know; I really care**

**I am not the abuser, Oh my dear and tender love.
You had my heart. In truth it was really I
Who was the fragile reed who feared to break
Under the weight of so much heaviness
And maybe that is why we had to part.**

**These shadows that can come between us once again,
Don't let them in. They are the darts
That pierce me through and through with pain
It's like a sin, you had my heart
And hurt it with these weird imaginings.
The things you feared all came about.
So, please, don't bring them in again.**

THEY TEAR MY HEART IN TWO

I try to hear your words
as I like to hear your words
Sweet things that drop into the silence
and make me gently grow.
Yet these words you speak out here & now -
"I want to leave. My spirit dies.
I need green trees and open fires."
You say, "I want to go."
Such bitter words - they tear my heart in two
As I try to hear your truth because I love you so.

"Yes", you said, "to see God in your eyes.
"Yes, to find a direction together"
So I can't believe that love like ours
Just dies and will not win through in the end.
"Yes, to remember who I really am with you."
And now you say you find you really aren't yourself.
My heart and mind each tries to comprehend,
To stay open, to stay loving - myself and truly you.
So it tears my heart in two to hear you want to go
And yet love me still and wish to be my friend.

We can sometimes show our doubt and fear.
Each has an abandoned child in there, in pain.
But these last few years have felt divinely blessed.
Life was filled with zest and sweet soft healing care
That made our bed a sacred place. Again you say
That sometimes things are all too much.
You need to play. You dared not feel the part of you that has to go.
A mere two months ago we were to wed.
Now you say it suffocates.
You are in pain. You want to gain your space.

I hear your words and yet the things you do
They tear my heart in two.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Somewhere a child lies
petrified with fear
As adult tread upon the stair
Or secret signal, horrifyingly clear
to the dreading child, forbodes
Another bout of shame and pain and tears
that gather heavy in a silent scream.

Somewhere inside a child cries.
She focusses upon the flowers, all yellow-white,
Which, in later years, will give the key
To memories' recall, locked up all tight
away behind the steel shutter, iron door and wall,
So that the pain and vitriolic rage cannot outpour
and overwhelm in devastating streams.

Somewhere a child dies a little more.
For years she's held that torrent back
and numbed herself. Her body image,
Tortured on the rack of inner pain,
is small and black, her face without a mouth,
A darkened room without a door,
A shroud without a seam,
A tangle of barbed wire and swords,
A never-ending nightmare dream.

Somewhere inside a child tries
To tell, to run, to yell, to scream
To find someone to trust who'll hear,
Who'll hold her tight and say, "Yes, dear !
This was not right.
You're not to blame.
Wrong has been done.
It's not your shame,
but ours, for letting this occur at all.
Don't feel despair, it's possible to heal.
The horror has been yours.
The problem's all of ours -
And it stops right here."

A BUTTERFLY OR A MAN?

**A butterfly is pattering at your window pane.
Is it frantic and trying to get out?
Or is it dying to get in?
Or is it a man, thinking he's like a butterfly,
Pattering at your window pane,
Desperate to taste your sweetness once again**

A BUTTERFLY OR A WOMAN ?

**Are you a butterfly, my dear ?
You came briefly into my life
With a richness of colour
And a delicacy beyond compare.
So I lost my heart
And dared to hope you'd stay
For you said you cared
And that you would be my wife
And as fully a woman as best you can.
Now you've flown away
To other flowers perhaps to another man
And winter grows near.
I suppose it had to end
For you had let your commitment lapse
And bend and felt you had to part
And so I gently broke my heart.
I do not really mind
You being something of a butterfly
For I still find that I still love you dearly.
Only please do not pretend
You are a woman too
Or you are a woman true.
Please be more true unto yourself
And don't confuse another guy, another man,
By pretending not to be a love-needing,
And love-seeking, on love-feeding, lovely butterfly.**

THE LITTLE PRINCESS

**Who are you going to tame now, little Princess ?
What games will you play of sweet seduction ?
Do you want him to grow closer, grow nearer ?
Will you ask him to come round at four o'clock each day ?
So as to let the delightful anticipation rise ?
No surprises now ! Keep to the proper rites !**

**Who are you going to tame now, little Princess ?
Whose hair will remind you of cornfields in the sun ?
Or of running through circles of standing stones ?
Or of standing together under the Northern Lights ?
Who will want to become friends with you ?
When you become friends, you say you have to tame them.**

**Who are you going to tame now, little Princess ?
Are you going to make them just the same ?
Are you going to try and make them safe ?
Are you ever really going to trust them ?
Will you let yourself go and really play the game ?
Don't play with them ! It is not real ! You steal something away !**

**Who are you going to tame now, little Princess ?
For when the time comes round to leave and part
What tears can be let flow ? What pain will you feel ?
Is it like steel knives that slip into the heart ?
"Yes, that is so," you say. Now I must go away.
I have so enjoyed the colour of wheat fields or green trees.**

**Who are you going to tame now, little Princess?
Because you are responsible forever for what you have tamed.
"I was just responsible for my heart," you say.
You might regret that too someday. You say you have a secret.
"The time we have wasted is what makes it so ... important."
"No". The trust we have wasted. The trust we have wasted too.**

**Who are you going to tame now, little Princess?
Another rose; another fox; another Little Prince.
Since we do not live in mystic worlds or magic fairy stories too,
Let me say one thing that I have found that's true.
You cannot tame another person. They lose themselves in being tame.
They are not really tame. They are not the same. Neither are you.
So who are you going to tame now, little Princess?**

THE SPIRAL PATH

**They walked the spiral path
With measured tread.
The age-old souls
Of long-dead druids
Stirred as their reverential
Footsteps led
Onward round and ever up
Towards the top
In silent prayer.
No-one spoke;
No laughter
Sounds of mirth
Resounded there.
We stopped and formed a circle
Holding hands
Around the power point.
We stood and felt the energy of earth
The energy we feel each day
Each breath and living moment
Till that day we die
Though the thrust of it
Is stronger here.
The power flows more clearly
More intense and pure
More deep and slow.
Quite suddenly & blindly
One man was moved to go.
He remembered all too well
The vows to love and trust
Of conjoint tenderness
Now quite unkindly changed -
His life was rearranged -
The vows and deep & magic spells
That he had made here
On this same day
Four years ago.**

FIRES OF LOVE

The flickering light of love
 that sprung between us two
And sometimes shone so bright
 as to put the sun and moon and stars to shame
Has now just quietly gone.

Not blasted by a torrential storm
 nor drenched or drowned by tears;
And when steadily snuffed out by blame
 or starved by eroding fears
Yet still hope brightly shone.

That ambient light, the gentle glow
 that lit our skin and flickered
In the night as log fires do
 when outside rain and wind did blow
And cold could not get in:

It lit us from inside, and perfumed essences
 like sandalwood upon the fire,
Made our love an offering, a sacred thing,
 a tryst to the Gods that overlook
And yet exist within each one.

It now has flown away; betrayed, forlorn, rejected too.
 If you had stayed ... but no, you had to go
You had your truth to find, your path led on.
 It made no real sense to go or e'en to stay
As the real fire had somehow gone.

The final blow, I know this now, was when you said
 You felt your newest flame was magic so.
It was as if you poured a bucket o'er the fire.
 The black and sticky ashes now remain
Where once sweet love did gently reign.

"Reality" is how I call the fuel that kept our fire alight
 Throughout these long four years
And brought us such delights that I can hardly tell.
 The water that did drown the fire was unreal images
And mystic spells of paradise that never really win.

COME TO ME

**Come to me penniless
And I cannot turn you away.
Come to me pregnant
By another man you now can't stand
And both of you can stay
Until you wish to go.**

**Come to me when you need rest
From hardship, pain or tears
Or when you need to find again
That which was best
Between us two.**

**Come to me old,
Haggard or diseased
Or battered by the ravages
Of life or long hard years
For I can love you still.
And I think I always will.**

**When our tears could flow,
When our fears could go
And when strife did not get in the way,
At those times when love did grow
We laid down such a tryst
That can never ever really break.**

**So whilst I am now free
And whilst you make a life anew,
You had my love for four sweet years.
No pain or even heartbreak
Can ever take that time away.**

**So if or when you come to me some day
There's really nothing more to say.
I make no further promises
Than you are welcome here;
To stay or go, just as you may.**

**And it may take me quite some time
To learn to trust you once again,
To overcome my pain and fear,
To learn to love you well once more
But feel free to come to me, my dear.**

STAY IN FAERY

**Don't change, please, don't get real.
It's very hard to feel the pain of life.
Don't dare get stuck in to really deal with
All the sticky ins and outs; the strife
Of sorting through the tissue
And fabric of reality mundane:
Of facing upto issues - that repeat
Themselves all over once again
And with other people's feelings
That might cause distress or grief
And the conflict of dualities
That can make one near insane
And of healing our old wounds
Which might mean feeling the old pain.**

**Don't try to attack the difficulties that seem so real,
Or strive to really deeply understand,
Or feel weighed down with great responsibilities,
Or cope with matters getting out of hand.
For you can contrive to make the normal choice;
You can choose what it is easiest to do.
Being nice unto yourself, just simply take
Another remedy down from the shelf
Or manifest what seems a miracle or two.
Since another's heart can't really break
From thwarted love or shattered dreams or depth of pain.
Just let the princess find another prince or even mortal man,
Someone else that she can captivate again,
So as to stay a magic butterfly in gorgeous Faeryland.**

EPITAPH

**You're gone, my girl. Now I'll be brief.
I'm left alone. I have my grief
And still I have the need for love
For warmth and soft & gentle arms
Instead I have a few good friends
And a touch of poetry that grew; and
My integrity - that's forged from pain
I almost like my solitude - that's new!
I will not close my heart down once again.**