

ELEVEN LOVE POEMS
by
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the rapture

i am at my desk
when waves of rapture threaten
to drown me

my breathing becomes erratic
and shallow and i wonder
if it isn't just something physiological

like hyperventilating
too much carbon dioxide
a disease

but no
i think it's remembering
the love i had for a high school girl

and later
very young woman
when I too was young

yes, you guessed it:
we are in touch again
but it's not what you think

there is the love
for the young girl
and there is an older woman

who has changed her name
has two ex-husbands, two sons,
and friends who are witches

baudelaire wrote about the strange sadness
welling up in him
out of nowhere

and now i write of this strange bliss
welling up out of nowhere
since i have not met her in almost 45 years

do I have a tumor
or she is transmitting this bliss
to me from northern washington state

whenever i feel anxious critical or distant
or remembering what i felt for her
when we were young

and it is part of my heart muscle
only now being released
like insulin or adrenaline

and so when she says something
hurtful and i feel myself close up
or when i doubt this relationship will go anywhere

that's when the rapture envelops me

Snowy Silence

red clothes in the washer downstairs
pandit jasraj singing upstairs
snowy silence on the streets

my heart is wide open
like a cliché at a writer's convention
snowy silence on the streets

it would be nice
to see you when we talk
snowy silence on the streets

after forty-odd years
oddness when we talk
snowy silence on the streets

i do not see you when i shave
but do see myself in you
snowy silence on the streets

we walked through temescal canyon
there was discomfort i remember
snowy silence on the streets

you were sitting on my lap
me probably trying to get into your jailbait pants
snowy silence on the streets

i felt awkward then
and awkward now
snowy silence on the streets

your voice breaks apart
our phones communicate poorly
snowy silence on the streets

now what was i saying
about my broken-open heart
snowy silence on the streets

we try to unravel each other's knots
or is it just me
snowy silence on the streets

the pandit sings of God
you tell me you only vaguely remember me
snow in the silent streets

i loved you for years
and always carried your photo in my back pocket
snowy streets in the silence

very quiet you were then
while i talked and talked
silence in the snowy streets

then we drifted apart
no one knows why or how it happened
streets in the snowy silence

i now wonder if it was love then
if it's love now and if there's such a thing as love
snow in the silent streets

blue sky envelops the snow-laden trees
i want to share my whole life with you
silence in the snowy streets

share it all, i have felt something
i have not felt in years
snow on the streets, silent

something lifted out of darkness
for just a moment, a window
snow on the silent streets

but who are you, really
after so many years
silence on the streets, snowy

pandit jasraj sings of broken-hearted love
of uneven love as if there is any other
snowy silence on the streets

whatever's real whatever's not
i want to love you while i can
snowy silence on the soft streets

rev 11/20/17

The New Lilac Garden

we decided to plant
a pear tree in the lilac garden

we wanted to plant
a bosc pear in the lilac garden

we agreed to plant
one pear tree in the lilac garden

we decided to plant
a pear tree in the lilac garden

after so many years
apart in our own lives

we somehow straggled in
to a lilac garden we had never seen before

and immediately became entangled
in the beautifully fragrant pale purple flower clusters

oh what a tangle
a beautiful, sweet-smelling tangle

surrounded by birds
whose common names we knew

by different names so we had to
resort to the Latin to get on the same page

and oh what a mess this was
sorting through taxonomies

through dictionaries and lexicons
plant guides and botanical gardens

trying to find names we could agree upon
after so many years each of us searching

for someone who called a chickadee
a chickadee and a scrub jay

a scrub jay and a flicker a flicker
we lay aside our bickering

exhausted and simply lay down
together under the new pear tree

in the lilac garden and together
fell asleep exhausted into the most wonderful

frightening dreams in which we lost
our selves and as one body and soul floated

ungrounded in one of the seven heavenly halls
holding our four hands tight for fear

of falling to earth like david bowie and having
people think we were aliens or something

which maybe we were and are
or land in a Chagall painting

with a violinist serenading our shades
but instead we just woke up

and dug a hole for the tree
filling it with dirt and manure

after which we inserted the tree
and to a litany of Carnatic melodies

from your past and my present
covered the roots and sat holding hands

thinking separately maybe we should have planted
an anjou or even another Chinese pear

to keep the one you planted before
and really, that would be just fine with me

we met in the pear garden
but without a leader

you an actress and me an actor
with years of experience between us

the old leader of the pear garden
is long gone

he or she died after we knew each other
and before we knew each other again

you are not my childhood friend
yet you still are

i am not your childhood friend
yet i still am

i still feel protective of you
the way an older brother might feel protective

toward his little sister
but you already have two older sisters

so maybe do not need me in this role
and if you saw me as an older, wiser, worldly brother

i maybe no longer need you to see me this way
since you now have sons of your own

we sit in a corner of the yard
under the tangle of different-specied lilacs

back to back, then side to side
then back to side and side to back

all manner of positions all the while
separate but together in the sweet-smelling aether

it is the fragrance of the bound lotus
the mysterious, gnostic, undescrivable perfume

permeating the dark matter of the universe
and now finding a way into this most temporal of worlds

finding the two of us awaiting spring
in a lilac garden we had always imagined was there

but had never been able to find
through the tangles on the fence

though the one we sat in
was not the one we had imagined

but another, more beautiful one
another, more fragrant one

with scents we could never have imagined
in the years we were not together

and cannot even now
remember as we grope our way

through the tangle in search of open sky
overcast for you, blue for me

groping toward each other
you toward who you think i am

me toward who i think you are
us toward what we hope will be real togetherness

bodies to touch and hold
to encircle, weave together, and let go

to watch grow old
to forget then remember

to remember then forget
again only to remember

as we watch death approach
very slowly we hope but knowing

it's at different speeds
until one day it will arrive

bodies to kiss, to penetrate
to stroke and sniff

always mindful
of the scent that led us to the garden

in the first place, and the bosc pear tree
as it first does nothing

then blossoms, and eventually bears fruit
that tastes best when still hard

at the still point before it begins to soften and spoil
with that sweet, crunchy taste

from the cascading wreath of white flowers
one tree, just one tree

is all that is needed to bear enough fruit
for a season, and then another season

perhaps until the end of this gilgul
this kalpa and we are both

figures in the painting of a future Chagall
floating on a canvas of dreams

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The Lilac Waves of Joy

i feel waves of love
one minute and the next wonder

how this could work
what with snow blanketing the soil

the lilac buds
waiting for the waves of love

you send from your place
near the border and maybe indeed

it really is you sending them
my way and you know what

i really like how this feels
and do not like the closed moments

between waves
dead spots like in the ocean

only worse, churning
with garbage from the sea floor

i think we have more
in common than i want to let on

in the mirror i see myself
a lot of myself in you

and of course a lot of you
in me

like weird, strange imaginings
of our power over the world

is it you sending these waves
talking to me, holding me in the morning

when i wake up
all trembly and anxious

as i always feel
in the morning

and is this anxiety
because i am too close

or too far
standing here alone

looking out over the snow
toward the lilac bush in the corner

imagining i hear your voice
that i feel the waves of love

washing over the hard lumps
in my psyche and oh there are a lot of them

i planted a twig several years ago
from a neighbor's lilac bush

and now it is a small tree
next to a lilac there from before

does it matter really
whether it is you

or just me thinking
it is you

since the feeling is
exactly the same

joy cascading
through my chest

through my up onto
my face, around my eyes

and lips which want to
break out in a grin as i haven't

in some time
this is grace

pouring down
the same grace that tells

the lilac buds when to open
so as not to open too soon

and get burnt and killed
by more freezing and snow

Bees on the Mint Flowers

bees on the mint flowers
crickets in the woods
autumn in the air

virginia creeper
turning red
plum tree turning gold

what is the meaning of life?
bees on the mint flowers
crickets in the woods

is there a world or is there not?
crickets in the woods
autumn in the air

did my mother die monday or sunday?
autumn in the air
plum tree turning yellow

am i the same person i've always been?
plum tree turning yellow
virginia creeper turning gold

did joseph knecht, magister ludi, drown or drown himself?
virginia creeper turning gold
bees on the mint flowers

is there more to life than meets the eye?
bees on the mint flowers
crickets in the woods

what is love anyway?
crickets in the woods
autumn in the air

is there life after death?
autumn in the air
plum tree turning yellow

i'm in love with sage
plum tree turning yellow
virginia creeper turning gold

bees on the lavender mint flowers
all day long
crickets chirping in the woods all night long

sweet nothings: seasons on the moon

he remembered
she didn't

she forgot
he hadn't

he liked to talk
she didn't

she liked to garden
he didn't

she was happy pulling weeds
he wasn't

he wanted orgasms
she didn't

she liked staying home
he didn't

he wanted to argue
she didn't

for years now
he had been searching for a woman

for years now
she hadn't been searching for a man

she liked rituals tied to the seasons of the moon
he just wanted to fuck her brains out

on the surface she seemed
so easy to get along with, so nice and sweet

on the surface he said that's who he wanted
but just beneath he wanted difficulties

and difficulties he got
along with beautiful flowers and scented tea

for in the nicest of ways
she was a royal pain

and so all night he wrestled
with ways to tell her nicely

it wasn't going to work
and yet on and on they went

she soothing him with her stellar massages
he prodding and prodding her

as she always had wanted
someone to prod her to open

and so forty-five years after they first parted
they went on and on and on

until wearied with no more words
no more silences they simply slept

night after night in each other's arms
wearied by the daily daze of close and distant

dreaming, he of the Pure Land shimmering
into the infinite whiteness of peaceful death

she of him holding her until
never letting go however much he tried

to get away from her ritualistic lunar embraces
swimming in the cycle of devotional music

after all those years apart
all she wanted was to talk about death

travel was a luxury
we couldn't afford

she didn't understand certain
things about the jail we were in

but didn't really try
to understand whereas i did

and believed the capitalist
crazy society was conspiring to take her

in every way it could while he
just wanted to loll around on the vast

beautiful beach of life
and whisper sweet nothings along with the gulls

Pillar of Salt

You go one way
I the other

When we're together
I'm on fire for you

When apart
I go crazy

With women I don't care about
I can turn them on

With you
You can take me or leave me

I want to touch the untouchable
You want only to touch the earth

I am at peace only
When we are asleep in the same bed

I can't hear or understand you
You don't listen or really hear me

How many times must I shout
For you to speak louder?

How many times must I ask you
To repeat yourself so I understand you

I always thought I was smart
But with you I'm Mr Stupid

I live in the past
You in the present

Yet you're not here
Even when appearing to be

I look into my mirror
And see you staring back at me

You have turned me
Into a pillar of salt

Mari Mari Ninne Moralida Nee

Mercy does not enter your thoughts
Even when I entreat you again and again

O Ceres who is everywhere in the world
You were not in a hurry when your garden needed you
You did not ignore messages from strangers
Or neglect to ask them how they were after their long journey

I have heard you tell of your mercy with your potatoes
You who swim in the river of life
Who is one with the oceans though the currents are strong
Please tell me why you ignore me while you help Indra, the sky god, who needs no help

Mercy does not come to your thoughts
Even when I entreat you again and again

O Great Cere-ji who listens to the flowers and herbs
Who asks how they are each morning
Who inquires into their deepest emotions
Who is curious about the aphids that crawl among the petals

What have I done that you drink deeply from every flower
Except those in my garden, to which you flit only briefly
That you tell the world of your exploits
But only cursorily inquire of mine, or not at all

Mercy does not come to your thoughts
Even when I entreat you again and again

O Ceres of the sun and stars
Of the clods of earth, the shallots and zucchini
I do not think you really want to know
Anything about me or to understand who I am

My other friends praise my poems
They tell me something in them has changed their life
They ask if they can share one with a friend
People I hardly know or do not care about provide the sweet nothings you do not

Mercy does not seem to be coming into your mind
Even when again and again I entreat you

You think nothing to avoid hurting the feelings of Hanuman
To assuage the loneliness of Ganesh

To defer to the wishes of Lakshmana
Yet when I cry out for just a sideways glance, your head remains turned away
And so please understand that it is not good for you
Not to be pleased with Saint Thyagaraja and his servant Sri Henry

The Fright, Fight, and Flight of the Bumbling Bee

He was just a lonely bumbling bee
Looking for a special flower
To call his own

He knew no one flower had it all
But he was hoping one might have
A lot of what he needed

So guess what?
He found a pretty nice one
Kinda far away but also kinda nice

Problem is
She's slow on the draw
Or doesn't like his pollen

She doesn't seem to notice
What he leaves her, or doesn't care
And only sometimes thanks him

So that he feels taken for granted.
After all: A bumblebee has feelings too
Especially one with childhood issues

All too often when he flies by
And gives her a buzz
She's "busy as a bee" (bzz bzz)

Or: "Sorry—didn't hear you"
"Leave a message, I'll get back to you later"
"Whoops—forgot to turn on my anthers"

Or else she has closed up shop for the day
Or hung a sign that says "Drop your load over there,
"I'll get to it another time, don't expect instant gratification"

He has left so many loads for her, without response
He doesn't want to leave any more
Until she gets back to him

Sometimes she simply says
Out and out:
"I'm getting too old for this kind of thing

"My ovaries are dried up
"I'm low on nectar
"And I'm afraid you might hurt me with that big yellow-black bod of yours"

Okay, okay, he knows he's getting old too
He gets the message
And could live with it but . . . not the treatment

Okay, once or twice he could live with it
But it's a year and a half now
And getting worse

Now he's scared she'll always be this way
But he doesn't really want to fight
It's not nice to raise a row . . . although maybe he should

What's a poor lonely bumbling bee to do
Who wants some of her pollen
And also wants to give her some special pollen he's picked up

Every time he sees a nifty flower
He rolls in its pollen
And can't wait to take it to her

But with her lack of response, what's he to do?
He begins to check out the other flowers
And boy there are a lot of them

Maybe they're not as special as she is
But they always seem open for business
And after he buzzes by they thank him right away

None of this shillyshallying
No "come back later"
No "I'm not sure I really want to be doing this"

No sirree Bob they're all smiles
Gracious and quickly so
So much that now each time he makes his rounds

He still visits her first, of course,
Because she's still his main squeeze
But he's not strong enough

To keep coming back later
Or having to remind her about the previous visit
Or ask her if she liked what he brought her

It's too hard
His patience is wearing thin
And his buzz kinda scratchy

Does he want to not visit her first
Or hurt her feelings
Or take his pollen elsewhere?

No! But there are all those other flowers
Fields are full of them—
Old ones, young ones

Pretty ones, ugly ones
Close ones and faraway ones
And you know what?

They seem eager to receive and to thank
And although a few of them
Are becoming regulars

He doesn't feel so good
About spending more time with them
Still: What's a poor lonely underappreciated neurotic bumbling bee to do?

So each morning
When he hits the runway
He buzzes some of those other flowers first

And whatever's left—and there's increasingly less—
Goes to the special flower
So eventually he cares less and less

Since if she's closed for the day
Or doesn't have time for him
Or says she doesn't want any

Or doesn't hear his buzz
Or won't get special anthers
To hear him

It doesn't matter so much:
He's just a poor lonely bumbling bee
Looking for a special flower

And if there isn't just one
He might have to settle
For a lot of less-special ones

Who eagerly await his visits and appreciate his pollen
Who nourish him with enough of what his lonely
Little bumbling bee heart needs

Flight of the Bumblebee

I'm just a sad and lonely little bumblebee
Looking for my one special flower

Sutra One

There are many kinds of flowers,
And all are special. Large flowers
And tiny flowers, flowers that smell
And flowers that don't.

There are flowers with large ovaries
And ones with small ones, flowers
Arranged in umbels, and one flower
To a stalk.

Sutra Two

Flowers come in myriad colors
From pale green to bright red,
Whitish yellow, pink, even sometimes
Blue, and of course white.

I can see every color except red
But I like red flowers too:
I can detect their ultraviolet patterns
That you humans cannot.

Sutra Three

Some flowers grow all alone
Like me
While others come in fields
Or in small clusters.

Some wrap around tree trunks
And some grow low to the ground
In mats, while still others
Hang from the crowns of trees.

Sutra Four

There are flowers that grow nearby
And are easy to reach, but lack nectar
And ones full of nectar
But too far away for a day's flight.

Flowers eager to dust me with their pollen
And those that are standoffish:
They might smell good and be smeared with nectar
But recoil at my touch, forcing me to sigh and move on.

Sutra Five

I like diving headfirst into some flowers
Rolling in them drunk on their nectar
Until I swoon and nearly lose consciousness
Before realizing it's time to move on.

Other flowers, not so much:
I like flitting around them
Dabbling on their anthers and stamens:
They are not meant for anything more serious.

Sutra Six

This flitting is, I tell you, sometimes fun
But other times tiresome:
Why can't I find
One flower that has it all?

Sometimes I think I have found the flower
But usually it is far away:
I like where I live, and besides, there's no guarantee
That faraway flower will be my flower for life.

Sutra Seven

There are flowers whose blooming
I greatly anticipate
Flowers at their peak
And flowers that are spent or nearly so:

All these are wondrous in their own way
Since I can't always tell where they're at
I try not to judge
But a guy does have to eat!

Sutra Eight

After a lifetime of flitting
And sometimes finding what I think
Is that one special flower
Only to find out it wasn't so special after all

I really am getting weary.
My friends tell me
It's too much to ask of one flower
That it will nourish me perfectly for the rest of my life.

Sutra Nine

Oh how I love those juicy
Sticky flowers into which I can stick
My special little tongue
And suck out the tasty nectar.

Pollen itself's okay
I guess but how I do like
Flowers with at least a few
Drops of sweet nectar.

Sutra Ten

As I was saying
I'm told it's too much to expect
One flower to fit all:
To attract and be attracted

To be colorful, big enough
To nourish me without my having
To look elsewhere
For supplements . . .

Sutra Eleven

. . . With lots of lovely pollen
And tasty juice
Take an interest in my whims
And peculiarities

And keep on giving
Even when
She's getting long in the stamen
And bent at the top, ovaries drooping

Sutra Twelve
Maybe a whole field
Of this one flower—
Perhaps that's
The answer.

Or maybe I will just
Need to be content with
One special flower
And continue to flit to supplement.

Sutra Thirteen
I'm just a lonely little bumblebee
Doing no one any harm
Looking for that one special flower
Why is it so hard to find?

I don't sting
Or bite
Or burrow under your skin;
I don't swarm or scare.

Sutra Fourteen
I'd settle for a few drops now
As I'm getting feeble myself
And can't expect the juicier flowers
To like me anymore

Still
I'm a lonely little bumblebee
What am I doing wrong?
This concludes my song

Bumblebee to Major Sage

Come in, Major Sage
Come in, Major Sage
Do you read me? Do you read me?
Come in, Major Sage!

Hungry bumblebee circling, looking for sage flowers to land on to explore for signs of intelligent life,
to possibly land on to rest from long solo journey
to refuel. . .

Come in, Major Sage?
Your signal is weak and fading.
Do you read me?
Hungry, tired bumblebee seeks respite from long, wearying, exhausting solo journey.
Running low on fuel. Gauge is near empty.
Only static. No response to request.
Request permission to land anyway, in case signal received but unable or unwilling to respond.
Come in, Major Sage. Come in, Major Sage!
Do you read me? Do you read me?
Running out of fuel. Desperate!
Regret must land on closest, first available flower.
Mayday. Mayday. . . .

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