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## Love Sonnets: Things Women Say

by CHARLES L. MEE

Monologues from the plays.

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### I Know a Man

THYONA

I know a man who will say I want to take care of you  
because he means he wants to use you for a while  
and while he's using you  
so you don't notice what he's doing  
he'll take care of you as if you were a new car  
before he decides to trade you in.

The male

the male is a biological accident  
an incomplete female  
the product of a damaged gene  
a half-dead lump of flesh  
trapped in a twilight zone somewhere between apes and humans  
always looking obsessively for some woman  
any woman

because he thinks if he can make some connection with a woman  
that will make him a whole human being!  
But it won't. It never will.

these cheap pikers,  
these welchers,

these liars,  
these double dealers,  
flim-flam artists,  
litterbugs,  
psychiatrists!

Boy babies should be flushed down the toilet at birth.

## You Are a Typical Male

ARIEL

You

are an ignorant shoot from the hip cowboy  
with your boots in cowshit  
like a cow puncher savage  
thinking you are such hot stuff  
rolling your cigarette with one hand at a full gallop  
but in reality you are a baby  
a baby dude ranch greenhorn dweeb  
who knows nothing  
nothing  
nothing about whatever  
nothing about life  
nothing about women  
nothing about men  
nothing about horses  
you are a guy that's all  
you are just a guy  
I could spit at you  
[she spits]  
I could spit at you and spit at you  
[she spits and spits]  
because what you are is a typical male  
I'll say no more  
a typical male  
you are a  
typical  
male  
which is to say a shithook  
and a dickhead

## How Could You?

CATHERINE

How could you?

And yet  
there it is.

And one day I will die  
and so will you.

And yet  
you could leave me.

I don't understand.

I will never understand  
how it is if you have only one life to live  
and you find your own true love  
the person all your life you were meant to find  
and your only job then was to cherish that person  
and care for that person  
and never let go

but it turns out  
you can still think

for some reason  
because this or that  
you end it

you end it forever  
you end it for the only life you will ever live on earth.

Maybe if you would be reincarnated  
and you could come back to life again and again a dozen times  
then this would make sense

to throw away your only chance for love in this life  
because you would have another chance in another life  
but when this is your only chance  
how can this make sense?

Do you think  
there will ever be a time  
when we could get back together?

## If You Go to Law School

SALLY

You'd think  
if you go to law school  
you'd learn to think clearly

and think things through  
you'd see your starting points  
and you'd be able to reason your way  
through to the end.  
And then it turns out  
you can't.

And now I think  
I can't imagine ever beginning to want to have an affair with anyone,  
I'd rather be left alone in peace.  
I don't see how it's worth it.  
I can masturbate.  
I can get a vibrator.  
They have the most wonderful vibrators these days,  
like saddles, you can sit on them like a horse  
and ride and ride all you want to;  
it doesn't buck, it doesn't whinny,  
it doesn't talk,  
you turn it on whenever you want,  
and when you're tired of it,  
you just push its button and it stops.  
If you like you can get a little one  
that fits right in your undies,  
and you make it go with a little remote control  
you can carry in your purse  
so that while you're out to lunch  
or at a wedding party  
you can be masturbating  
while you're in the middle of a conversation,  
and when the conversation's over  
no one has any hard feelings.

## I Don't Understand

CATHERINE  
One day I will die  
and so will you.  
And yet  
you could leave me.  
I don't understand.  
I will never understand  
how it is if you have only one life to live  
and you find your own true love

the person all your life you were meant to find  
and your only job then was to cherish that person  
and care for that person  
and never let go  
but it turns out  
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Maybe if you would be reincarnated  
and you could come back to life again and again a dozen times  
then this would make sense  
to throw away your only chance for love in this life  
because you would have another chance in another life  
but when this is your only chance  
how can this make sense?

More than anything  
I love to lie in bed with you at night  
and look at your naked back  
and stroke your back slowly  
from your neck to your coccyx  
and let my fingers fan out  
and drift over your smooth buttock  
and slip slowly down along your thigh  
to your sweet knee  
only to return again  
coming up the back of your thigh  
hesitating a moment  
to let my fingers rest in the sweet valley  
at the very top of your thigh, just below your buttock  
and so slowly up along the small of your back  
to your shoulder blade  
and then to let your hair tickle my face  
as I put my lips to your shoulder  
and kiss you and kiss you and kiss you forever  
this is what I call heaven  
and what I hope will last forever

## Romeo and Juliet

EDITH

Sometimes in life  
you just get one chance.  
Romeo and Juliet  
They meet, they fall in love, they die.  
That's the truth of life  
you have one great love  
You're born, you die  
in between, if you're lucky  
you have one great love  
not two, not three,  
just one.  
It can last for years or for a moment  
and then  
it can be years later or a moment later  
you die  
and that's how it is to be human  
that's what the great poets and dramatists have known  
you see Romeo and Juliet  
you think: how young they were  
they didn't know  
there's more than one pebble on the beach  
but no.  
There's only one pebble on the beach.  
Sometimes not even one.

## I Love You

ARIEL

I love you, with all my heart.  
I love your hands and your kneecaps and your hair and your ears  
and I love the way you are sweet when you are sweet  
and the way you fuck up  
because even when you fuck up  
and it makes me so mad  
you are actually so incompetent at it  
such a wild, untargeted loser that I love you  
because I think the reason you are such a loser  
is that your heart is good  
and so you can't hit the bull's-eye  
when you are acting like a nasty shit

so that people don't have to take it seriously  
and they can just wait till you realize  
how wrong you've been  
and also right  
also right  
because I don't think you are a pathetic loser  
that people love out of pity  
or because they want to be with some weak  
useless guy they can manipulate  
you really are a winner  
because of your heart  
which is always there  
and when you come around  
we all see it  
and see you always were a good human being.

## The Life I Have in Mind

TILLY

I would eat tarte tatins  
and drink Chateau Neuf du Pape  
and sometimes a glass of rose  
sitting in the garden in the afternoon  
and, if it wouldn't hurt too much  
or become a habit leading down the path to hell  
I'd like to have just one cigarette every day  
or even one every other day  
with an espresso, in the café  
one of the cafés  
and then I'd drive out to the hospital  
where Van Gogh spent that year  
painting the cypresses and the olive trees  
and you think:  
he was crazy  
and pathetic  
what a tragedy  
how he suffered  
but you know  
he turned out a hundred a thirty paintings  
or a hundred and forty paintings  
or, like a hundred and forty three paintings  
like he turned out a painting every two and a half days  
for a year!

that's where he turned out The Starry Night!  
I don't even mention the olive grove  
or the field with the red poppies  
and that's what I would do  
I would be a painter if I could even just hold a brush right  
if I just had enough talent to dip a brush into some paint  
and slather it on the canvas  
because that is a perfect life  
you just get up in the morning  
and you get your cup of coffee  
and you wander into your studio  
and whatever catches your eye is what you do  
you think  
oh, that painting I was working on yesterday  
that could use a little splash of red up there near the top  
and so you dip your brush into the paint  
and you splash some red  
and then a little yellow  
some green here over on the right  
you think  
okay  
I could put a sailboat up there in the sky  
and then you have another sip of your coffee  
and you notice the little ceramic vase  
you had been working on the day before yesterday  
and you think  
I could put some kind of flat, muted purple  
right there where its stomach bulges out a little bit  
and then you see that drawing  
that fell on the floor  
off that table down near the other end of your studio  
and you go to pick it up  
and you just can't resist  
doing a little something to it  
adding a little picnic table to the landscape  
and by the time you finish that  
you find yourself down at the other end of your studio  
near the door out onto the terrace  
so you go out onto the terrace  
and sit at the little table there overlooking the vineyard  
because by then it's time for lunch  
and your husband brings you a sandwich  
and maybe a little glass of beaume de venise  
and after lunch  
you make love for the rest of the afternoon.  
That's the life I have in mind.

## I Don't Think It's Wrong

OLYMPIA

These men!

These men!

All I wanted was a man who could be gentle  
a man who likes to cuddle  
a man who likes to talk  
a man who likes to listen

And I don't think it's wrong

to lie in the bath

and curl my hair

and paint my nails

to like my clothes

and think they're sexy

and wear short skirts

that blow up in the wind

I don't think it's wrong

for a man to love me

to like to touch me

and listen to me

and talk to me

and write me notes

and give me flowers

because I like men

I like men

And, I like to be submissive.

Some people go on honeymoons, too.

They go to places where there are hammocks and white sand

and people hold them by the waist

and lift them up out of the water

splashing and laughing

and they dive underwater

without the tops to their swimming suits

and the sun sets

and people drink things through straws

and they listen to the waves

and even make love in the afternoon

and even like Giuliano says to be submissive

because, to me,

submission is giving up your body,

and your mind and your emotions

and everything  
to a someone who can accept all the responsibilities that go with that.  
And I myself enjoy the freedom that submission gives me.  
I like to be tickled and tortured  
and I like to scream and scream  
and feel helpless  
and be totally controlled  
and see how good that makes someone else feel.  
It is for me the most natural high.  
It is so much better than taking drugs.  
You can just relax and enjoy yourself  
and feel alive and free inside.

## Sometimes a Woman Likes Sex

MARIA

Sometimes a woman likes sex,  
and not always something gentle and considerate  
sometimes a little wild or it could be ridiculous  
like a ride on the handlebars of a bicycle  
and therefore she will do something wrong to have this  
and not be very proud of having done it  
but not be needing a lecture afterwards  
from a person pretending to be a sort of moral authority  
or even actually being a sort of moral authority  
but even if he is  
being a little boring and depressing because of it  
a little like a heavy thing  
as much as she hates to say it  
because she may feel this person is a really good person  
deep down  
deeply good and kind and considerate  
and deserving real love in return because of that  
not just some stifling person who ought to be snuffed  
but in his own way  
even if it is not her way  
in his own way even lovable  
but possibly lovable by someone else.

## The Wedding Guests

MERIDEE

there are people who still want to love each other  
and be together  
and not just halfway,  
not just keeping one foot out on the river bank  
ready to say at any moment  
ok, forget it,  
I guess we grew apart  
save yourself, I'm out of here  
but they want to say  
no, I'm going all the way with you  
I'm here with you forever  
I want to make this commitment to you  
people still want to do this  
because  
no matter what we've seen in our lifetimes  
this is still a universal human desire  
the desire for love forever  
and people still want to give themselves to that  
and notice it  
and mark it with a special occasion  
so that when they die  
it doesn't seem like the most important thing in their lives  
was—what?—having their appendix out?  
because everyone made such a big deal about that?  
and love IS an important thing  
it may be a necessary thing even  
for the world to go on  
and so, the wedding guests are there  
because when people make this promise to one another  
it's a happy occasion  
and the most important one  
and people like to share it.  
And leave town before the misery begins.

## The Next Big Event of My Life

MERIDEE

I thought the next big event of my life  
would be getting married  
but now I see

the next big event will be dying.  
Because it's over and  
you went so fast  
in the arms of someone else  
how could anyone ever trust love again  
when it can disappear so fast  
and leave me all alone forever

I was thinking all this time:  
we're so important to one another  
and it turns out I was wrong about the biggest thing in my life  
how can I think I can be right about anything else?  
the time you came home from being away  
I said to you, "you've come home"  
and you said yes  
and I said but I don't think so  
I think you left two months ago  
and you are never coming back because  
when I called one time  
I felt something had happened  
I heard it on the phone  
and you said  
I don't know  
What don't you know?  
I don't know if I can come back.  
Because you've fallen in love, I said?  
What?  
Because you've fallen for another woman?  
Don't trivialize it, he said.  
it felt as though all at once the city had been bombed out  
the house had been burned down  
I asked him: Have you had a love affair?  
He said no.  
You've fallen for someone else  
He said no.  
You've had a fling. A one night stand.  
My heart had stopped.  
No, he said.  
I said I don't believe it.  
Believe what you want, he said.  
And now I've stopped breathing.

And I think the truth is  
I always came last  
and I hate you for that  
and now I see I'm dying

the only person I've ever loved in my life  
my life itself  
and now you're gone  
and I will never have you back  
and if you do come back  
I will say to you  
just go  
just go  
because you are always just leaving me  
every time you go away and come back  
you say you can't come back to me  
and I always felt from the very first,  
from the first night we spent together,  
the pain of your rejecting me.

so go this time  
you are going to leave me eventually  
I have always known it,  
so leave me now  
I've pursued you and pursued you and pursued you  
in every way for all these years  
and you have rejected me and rejected me and rejected me  
I have to rip you out of my heart  
but it just tears me apart like a rag  
you say I say these things  
to manipulate you  
but how can I manipulate you?  
when you stick a knife into an animal  
it will kick and jerk and cry out  
before it dies  
it can't help itself  
I keep waiting for my love for you to stop, to stop  
but it won't end  
and I can't bear it  
I miss being with you,  
just hearing you breathe  
holding you through the night if I would dare  
I couldn't help myself either  
pretending I didn't care  
turning over myself in bed, turning my back to you  
hoping you would see my behavior as a mirror of your own  
seeing you should turn back to me  
not giving you everything I could  
everything you wanted  
every single thing because you sweet sweet soul  
you had deserved every single thing in life you wished  
And I so regret

not finding a way  
to find you,  
instead of withdrawing from you—  
and so making you feel, I suppose,  
not loved, not pursued, not treasured  
not precious as I felt you were.  
Not giving you all the things I felt for you  
And so I keep trying over and over  
to let you go,  
and even as I say that  
it takes my breath away  
to think that I would let go  
of the only person in my life I have ever loved so completely,  
you've been my life itself to me,  
that's what I find so hard to let go of  
and why, when I come close to letting go,  
it feels like the only death I'll die.  
And is this the way I'm going to feel the rest of my life?  
Or will it go away like a single breath?

## You Might Say I'd Never Do Such a Thing

SALOME

I had a friend:  
when she first met her husband  
he was preoccupied with young girls.  
All the time.  
Paul. His name was Paul.  
Looking at pictures of them.  
Looking at them on the street.  
To her it seemed strange.  
And, then, the first time she helped him get a young girl into the car  
to take her home,  
she was,  
my friend was,  
well,  
quivering,  
a knot in her stomach,  
that sick excited sensation.

After that it was easy.  
I don't mean she doesn't still get excited,  
but it was never again like the first time.

The first time is always different, with everything.  
I mean,  
obviously.

You might say  
I'd never do such a thing  
how do you know?  
you say: because that's not the kind of person I am  
But you don't know.  
Because one day you will do something  
and then you will find out what sort of person you are.

[she smiles]

You see a woman when she is grown up  
you see how she has turned out  
and you think then you could say, oh, right  
this was inevitable  
the way she grew up  
you could tell how she would turn out  
this is the person she would be  
because Freud bla bla bla  
and the social dynamics  
her background bla bla  
hindsight is so good  
all the theories of hindsight are foolproof  
but you don't know  
you never know—  
she could be a hundred people  
before she's through with her life  
that's how it is these days

As a child  
I thought about numbers a lot.  
First there was the question  
could a woman have several husbands all at the same time  
or only one after the other?  
And then, as the years went by,  
I thought about how many children a woman might have.  
And then,  
a few weeks after I lost my virginity  
I had group sex.  
There were five of us altogether,  
three boys and two girls.

[she stops and smiles—  
a bright, engaging, innocent smile]

We were finishing our lunch in a garden  
on a hill above Lyon.  
It was in June or July  
it was hot  
and somebody suggested that we take off all our clothes  
and jump into the pond.  
I could hear Andre saying  
his girlfriend would be with us in just a minute  
but his voice sounded a little muffled  
because I already had my T-shirt over my head  
and then, in the end,  
no one went in the water.

Andre fucked me first  
quite slowly and calmly  
which was his way.  
And then Ringo came and took his place on top of me.  
Ringo's body was different from Andre's  
and I liked it better.  
Ringo was taller, wiry,  
he was one of those men who can isolate  
the action of his pelvis from the rest of his body,  
so that he could thrust without smothering a woman,  
supporting his torso with his arms.

you look at history  
not to know how things are going to be  
and not for the rules of how things have to be  
but to tell you that  
the way things are is not the way they always have been  
or the only way they can be

and now  
looking back  
whatever there has been  
it's all available to us now  
to pick and choose  
have one of these and one of those  
and make a life of that

I won't say how many shoes I've got  
but I have no regrets about any of them.  
In fact, there are some shoes I love so much  
that I'll go out and buy double colors.  
Because if it's like a great red shoe that's fabulous for the summer  
and I love it  
and it's the right color red

then I've got to have two—  
because I know I'll live in the shoe  
and it will get destroyed  
and I'll need a new one.  
And men don't understand this.  
My husband used to say  
darling what have you done?  
It looks like you've been to a fire sale!"  
And I would think, "honey, you wish!"

How a human will turn out  
well  
they just turn out how they do  
and then you know  
but you don't know before  
and then, later on, maybe they change their minds  
and they turn out another way  
and then they turn out another way yet again  
and you never knew  
because the human creature is a surprising, fluid event

oh, you can say, bla bla bla

but I don't think so  
you didn't know how Elizabeth Taylor was going to turn out  
you didn't know how Simone de Beauvoir was going to turn out  
you didn't know how Celine Dion was going to turn out  
neither did her mother  
because, if you did, you would have been able to predict feminism  
which you didn't  
or Brigitte Bardot or Saddam Hussein  
which you didn't  
because you didn't know

This guy said to me one time  
I can't pin you down  
like a butterfly, you mean?  
I don't know he said  
well, I said,  
I don't think I want to be pinned down.

[she smiles]

One time I was offered to my masters  
I was going to be whipped in that humiliating position—  
arms and legs spread—  
and I was perspiring

my body was taut with the pain  
but pain turning into pleasure  
and then when Pierre began to put the pincers on my breasts  
well that always makes me suffer a great deal  
and I thought I couldn't endure it  
but when I was suspended by the handcuffs  
and I felt the pain in my thighs  
and I couldn't turn my head to see anyone in the room  
and Fiona put something on me  
I don't know what it was  
an electric drill and miniaspirator of some kind  
while she was touching me with such a soft hand  
and the sugar-sweet smell of her perfume filled my nostrils  
so that it was very sweet and unbearable at the same time  
this dizzying shiver shot through me  
and I was afraid I was going to piss myself with pleasure  
like a stark beginner  
my thighs were trembling  
I was soaked  
I was soaked  
so that I thought for a moment that the juices ran as far as my thighs

There was a time I thought after the first time  
never again  
OK  
never again.  
What you have done once is not your fate  
not something you have to do over and over again  
and so you say  
never again

but then you do it again

## What Is a Man after All?

ESTHER  
Go home and wait for him  
to come home  
because of what?  
Because he's gotten hungry at last?  
Because he needs to do his laundry?  
Because what is a man after all  
if not the most dependent sort of creature in the world?

Useless and pathetic.  
Who has no need greater than to be  
protected and admired, guided, and sheltered  
by Mama  
to be at home, at home  
where he can spend his time  
wallowing in basic animal activities:  
eating, sleeping relaxing  
and being soothed by Mama:  
passive, rattle-headed  
Daddy's Girl,  
ever eager for approval,  
for a pat on the head,  
for the "respect" of any passing piece of garbage  
mindless ministrator to physical needs,  
soother of the weary,  
booster of the puny ego,  
appreciator of the contemptible,  
a hot water bottle with tits.

And then a man will make a society that is not a community  
but merely a collection of isolated family units.

Why?  
desperately insecure,  
fearing his woman will leave him  
if she is exposed to other men  
or to anything remotely resembling life,  
the male seeks to isolate her from other men  
and from what little civilization there is,  
so he moves her out to the suburbs,  
a collection of self-absorbed couples and their kids.  
And there is yet another reason  
for the male to isolate himself:  
every man is an island.  
Trapped inside himself,  
emotionally isolated,  
unable to relate,  
the male has a horror of civilization, people, cities,  
situations requiring an ability to understand  
and relate to people.  
So, like a scared rabbit, he scurries off,  
dragging Daddy's little asshole along with him  
to the wilderness, the suburbs,  
where he can fuck and breed undisturbed.

Men cannot co-operate to achieve a common end,  
because each man's end is all the pussy for himself.  
The male cannot progress socially,  
but merely swings back and forth  
from isolation to gangbanging.

## The Man I Used to Love

ZIYI

The man I used to love  
would say to me from time to time  
don't you think you should go home now for a while  
to visit with your parents  
because he didn't think where he and I lived was our home  
and because he wanted to have a fling  
and even to have his fling in the bed we slept in

because he wasn't afraid of anything

and sometimes I would come home—  
because it was home to me—  
and he would be there with a mistress  
and I was expected to make conversation with her  
and I did because—what did she know?  
she must have been as confused as I was—  
and sometimes he would even expect me to take his mistress out for a walk  
because he was expecting another lover  
and so his mistress—is this what people say,  
these days still: his mistress?—  
his mistress and I would go for a long walk  
and sit in a cafe drinking coffee  
while my husband was making love with someone else  
who could do this now that you think back on it?—  
why would I live like that?  
but the one thing that is for sure is  
if I am so untrustworthy a person  
so unable to look out for myself  
for sure I don't want to get mixed up with another man  
before I know what I am doing  
and what just happened if it wasn't that?

## Older Men

ZIYI

I mean, not that I have anything against older men  
quite the opposite in a way  
only I was married to an older man  
and he took such a patriarchal position  
and then I  
I found I liked it  
I invited it  
so we had almost a sado masochistic relationship  
which I found I just loved  
he had other lovers  
he treated me like dirt  
he wanted always to handcuff me to the bed  
and it seems I not only fell into a sort of dependent role  
but I had sought it all along  
so now  
I'm trying to go straight  
you know  
grow up  
have a relationship with another grownup person  
as a grownup person  
if I have any relationship at all  
and at the moment I don't have one at all  
and don't want one  
because I'm still recovering  
and you?

## Why Am I Doing This?

ANOTHER GIRL

i pop too many pills my boyfriend says.  
he confiscated a bottle, but i have others.  
I take more then he knows behind his back.  
it was already a huge trust issue when he found out  
i had been taking one drug behind his back,  
if he were to now discover that i've continued doing this  
with not one but several drugs, he may never trust me again.  
and he loves me so much it would destroy him.  
why am i doing this?  
am i trying to sabotage my relationship?  
that can't be,

i love him more than my own life and i can't imagine a life without him.  
i know we'd both contemplate suicide if we were to break up,  
and worse,  
i'm his first real love,  
he's never had a serious relationship before me.  
i don't know how he'd handle it if it did end.  
that's one of my worst fears, hurting him. and i have been recently.  
things were so rough yesterday, this has never happened to us in 2 years.  
so why can't i stop lying to him?  
i'm a deceitful, manipulative, and undeserving little cunt.  
he's this best thing that's ever happened to me,  
why am i throwing a wrench into a beautifully functioning machine?  
god i need to get a grip on myself.  
i can see disappointment and sadness in his eyes sometimes now.  
it's killing me  
i don't think i love him anymore.

## How Would You Kill a Rat?

THYONA

I had a friend,  
a psychologist,  
who did an experiment on rats when he was a student in the university,  
and when he finished his experiment,  
he was faced with the problem  
of what to do with the rats.  
He asked his advisor,  
and his advisor said:  
“Sacrifice them.”  
My friend said: “How?”  
And his advisor said:  
“Like this.”  
And his advisor took hold of a rat  
and bashed its head against the side of a workbench.  
My friend felt sick,  
and asked his advisor how he could do that—  
even though, in fact, as my friend knew,  
this was not exactly a cruel way to kill a rat,  
since instant death is caused  
by cervical dislocation.  
And his advisor said to him:  
“What’s the matter?  
Maybe you’re not

cut out to be a psychologist.

How would you kill a rat?

I don't know.

If you had to.

Hanging by the wrists,

burning with cigarettes

burning with an iron

hosing with water

hitting with fists

kicking with boots

hitting with truncheons

hitting with whips

exposing to cold showers

depriving of sleep

depriving of toilets

depriving of food

subjecting to abuse

beating with fists and clubs

hitting the genitals

hitting the head against the wall

electric shocks used on the head

on the genitals

on the feet

on the lips

on the eyes

on the genitals

hitting with fists

whipping with cables

strapping to crosses

caning on the backside

caning on the limbs

inserting sticks

inserting heated skewers

inserting bottle necks

pouring on boiling water

injecting with haloperidol

chlorpromazine

trifluoperazine

beating on the skull

cutting off the fingers

submerging in water  
breaking of limbs  
smashing of jaws  
crushing of feet  
breaking of teeth  
cutting the face  
removing the finger nails  
wrapping in plastic  
closing in a box  
castrating  
multiple cutting

## The Point Is

ELLA

The point is, you came on way too strong.  
That's not the sort of thing you can take back now.  
The damage has been done.  
That's why people, when people play bridge,  
they lead with the three of clubs,  
they feel it out  
and then they can build from there.  
But when you throw down the ace of spades,  
what is it?  
You're going for a grand slam or what?

I've been thinking of us being together  
and what I thought was  
the mental picture that came to mind was  
I walked into Dean and Deluca  
and I saw that the man in front of me was sweating and  
twitching  
and just then all of the automatic doors slid shut  
and the lights started blinking.  
The man was shooting at the produce  
and screaming instructions in Arabic which no one understood.  
So I started interpreting for him  
because I could tell what he must have meant.  
And everyone got down on the floor on their stomachs  
and crawled toward the corners.

They were sleeping in the stairwells and the hallways and  
on the bathroom floors.

People started to get sick.  
Each night 10 or 15 of the sick old men  
were taken to the spare bedroom  
and told to lie down in a clump.  
The men with machine guns said  
that they would fire one bullet per person into the clump  
and if anyone managed to live they could live.  
But when they opened fire  
they just kept on shooting until everyone was hit.

You came in and led me to the bathroom.  
You sat me down on the toilet and gave me 10 punchlines  
and told me to come up with the jokes that went with them.  
I matched them up correctly  
and then you added in some homeopathic remedies  
where you said the herb  
and I had to say what it cured.

I ran through the back wall into the garden  
where all of my theatre friends were having a lingerie dinner party.

Everyone was dressed in long silk gowns.

The tables were covered with silk pajamas and robes sewn together.

And then it started raining  
and everyone ran around grabbing the silk and disappearing.  
So I ran for the elevator  
but when the doors closed we saw the elevator rolling away  
and we were on an Amish school bus.  
All of the kids and teachers were smiling at us and clapping.

The driver let me off at the elephant trainer's  
and he said he would take me back on his elephant.

So I climbed up on his back  
and he started walking  
and just a few steps down the road  
he turned his head around and wrapped his trunk around my waist  
and said that he had fallen in love with me  
and he wouldn't ever let go.

What do you think that means?

## Feelings Are Feelings

SUSAN

I'm a person who is looking for true love  
like anyone else  
except the difference is  
I am trying not to be afraid of my feelings  
and censor things  
and lie and lie and lie all the time  
pretending I feel like this or that  
going with some guy because I couldn't be sure any more  
how I felt about him  
because he had some things I liked and other things I didn't  
and trying to talk myself into not caring about the things I cared about  
and caring about the things I didn't care about  
because I've done that a lot in the past  
so I am trying to let my feelings lead me through life  
And  
feelings are feelings  
they come and go.  
So probably I'm just as disoriented as you are  
and left in the lurch  
suddenly dropped  
or thrown down the stairs  
it's not as though this is not a struggle for me too  
but the one thing you can be sure of is  
if ever I am sure of how I feel  
in a way that is the kind of feeling that I know will last  
then when that time comes  
if it so happens that I do tell you I love you  
then you can be sure of it.

## To Lie in Bed with You at Night

CATHERINE

More than anything  
I love to lie in bed with you at night  
and look at your naked back  
and stroke your back slowly  
from your neck to your coccyx  
and let my fingers fan out  
and drift over your smooth buttock  
and slip slowly down along your thigh

to your sweet knee  
only to return again  
coming up the back of your thigh  
hesitating a moment  
to let my fingers rest in the sweet valley  
at the very top of your thigh, just below your buttock  
and so slowly up along the small of your back  
to your shoulder blade  
and then to let your hair tickle my face  
as I put my lips to your shoulder  
and kiss you and kiss you and kiss you forever  
this is what I call heaven  
and what I hope will last forever

## I've Been Looking for You

JUNE  
And you  
now I know why I haven't been married  
because I've been looking for you  
all these years  
I knew I was right  
even though I had no idea  
I would be happy just to sit with you  
in an airplane for the rest of my life  
my shoulder pressed against yours  
and to hear you laugh  
because more than anything  
I love it when you laugh  
because nothing is more important  
than the things that make a person laugh or smile  
because your sense of humor  
that's something you can't help  
you can pretend you know something about novels  
or you can pretend to be considerate  
but a sense of humor is something you can't fake  
what gets to you  
what strikes you in a certain way  
it's just spontaneously how you are  
when you're not thinking  
and I saw you

all the way from Los Angeles to New York  
smiling and smiling  
and I knew  
I had to have you.

## The Desire for Love Forever

MERIDEE

there are people who still want to love each other  
and be together  
and not just halfway,  
not just keeping one foot out on the river bank  
ready to say at any moment  
ok, forget it,  
I guess we grew apart  
save yourself, I'm out of here  
but they want to say  
no, I'm going all the way with you  
I'm here with you forever  
I want to make this commitment to you  
people still want to do this  
because  
no matter what we've seen in our lifetimes  
this is still a universal human desire  
the desire for love forever  
and people still want to give themselves to that  
and notice it  
and mark it with a special occasion  
so that when they die  
it doesn't seem like the most important thing in their lives  
was—what?—having their appendix out?  
because everyone made such a big deal about that?  
and love IS an important thing  
it may be a necessary thing even  
for the world to go on

## A Glass of Wine

MARIA

It turns out life is nothing but loose ends.  
It's not that, just because one has many love affairs  
or love affairs with people one shouldn't  
that that makes you a person incapable of love  
or a person who has no feelings  
I myself  
I pray for a better world  
a world where there will be no such thing  
as unrequited love and pain and suffering  
and women can return the love of any man  
where people live in peace  
where the whole world will be like Tuscany  
the evening sunset on the vines  
and olive trees  
a golden glow  
roses growing up the sides of farm houses  
a glass of wine in the lingering twilight  
grandchildren playing down by the arbor  
reading by the pool  
the circus performers from the village  
coming out to the house for lunch  
entertaining the children with their clowning  
and juggling  
the family in the kitchen  
making dinner together  
the children picking fresh vegetables  
the neighboring farmer holding forth  
reciting Dante by heart  
stanza after stanza  
and bursting into song  
arias from Verdi  
the mother sitting at the hearth  
giving her breast to her baby  
fresh herbs  
the fennel and the basil  
the roasted garlic and the fish stew  
we'll have our own wine  
from the vines nearby the house  
our own olive oil  
from the trees on the nearby hillside  
we will laugh and cry and tell stories  
we will have love affairs  
and no one will be hurt

aunts and uncles will gather every Sunday  
to take care of the children  
while we have a nap in the upstairs bedroom  
oh Tuscany Tuscany  
how I long for you and love you.

## Of All Human Qualities, the Greatest Is Sympathy

BELLA  
In the end,  
of all human qualities,  
the greatest is sympathy—  
for clouds even  
or snow  
for meadows  
for the banks of ditches  
for turf bogs  
or rotten wood  
for wet ravines  
silk stockings  
buttons  
birds nests  
hummingbirds  
prisms  
jasmine  
orange flower water  
lessons for the flute  
a quill pen  
a red umbrella  
some faded thing  
handkerchiefs made of lawn  
of cambric  
of Irish linen  
of Chinese silk  
dog's blood  
the dung beetle  
goat dung  
a mouse cut in two  
In spring the dawn.  
In summer the nights.  
In autumn the evenings  
In winter the early mornings  
the burning firewood

piles of white ashes  
the ground white with frost  
spring water welling up  
the hum of the insects  
the human voice  
piano virtuosos  
orchestras  
the pear tree  
The sunlight you see in water as you pour it from a pitcher into a bowl.  
The earth itself.  
Dirt.

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