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## MEASURING STICK

by Glenn Holloway

They told her—kindly, of course—

To try something else, ~~because~~

She had no talent for poetry. ~~—~~

~~I found her sitting~~ on the ground,

Silent and slumped like the toadstools around her.

~~She wasn't~~ crying, But from the pages

She ~~gave~~ me, I knew

She knew how to cry.

~~Her meter was as seldom as a total eclipse.~~

~~No, not free verse— an iambic beat tried to be there.~~

~~They told her the rhyme pattern was all wrong.~~

~~And it was. Like wearing mismatched shoes.~~

~~No newly minted phrases. No provocative twists.~~

~~They said she was just not a poet. But~~

~~From her lines I know~~ this about her—

She looked at a dandelion and saw resurrection;

She reached into black holes and felt the fingers of God!

Heaven alone may understand,  
If even Heaven does—  
This strange estate, this Satan's seal,  
This clutch that claims my soul.  
  
These strangled callings, can you hear?  
They clamor for control—  
Erato's whisper: "Poet art thou",  
Some playwright's ghost ~~out~~ shouts!  
  
I never prepared my voice to sing;  
Why did it turn to gold?  
I never have toasted Terpsichore,  
Yet still she came and bred...  
  
The shades of sculptors haunt my hands,  
And fight my mother's gift—  
The only birthright gift I own—  
The rest are bastard freaks.  
  
Her truth of touch, her rare technique,  
Her keyboard mastery  
Precede this horde that made me host,  
Infesting heart and mind.

How long will my destruction take

Upon this devil's altar?

They wind me, tease me, feed me wine

To keep me running longer.

Oh, never let me hear again

The sound of wild applause.

Serve no more sticky spoons of praise;

It doesn't soothe the burn.

You proud, proud parents, bring me not

Another gifted child.

You fools, you dreamers, it's a curse!

No worse can Hell devise!

I often read that parable—

The man with just one talent...

I envy him above all men;

Most people envy me!

Would I be wrong to bury some?

Will mine continue doubling?

Oh, God, I'll gladly share with ten

My fair and fatal demons!