

**Filthy Sonnets  
and Other Obsessive Poems in Form**

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## Blood Test

I did a brave thing once for love.

A man I wanted wanted me,  
And after we were safely lovers  
He asked me carefully if I was safe.

So, sensibly, I went to take the test  
And sat, insensibly, and feared  
Instead of the results, the test itself.

That bright sucking needle  
And blood  
Not calmly seeping monthly blood,  
But quick blood pillaged by the needle's prick.

Room 101. Torquemada  
Was brown of eye and bright of cheek  
Was young, and amateur, and beautiful.

His voice was gentle, too, so I  
Confessed my terror, trying to smile.  
He soothed me with a kind bewilderment,  
But brought out the needle.

And I broke, and basely cowered from it.

This whimpering, groveling thing, myself,  
Was surely strange to him, and yet  
He held my hand caressingly,  
As though he cared, or wanted me, or both.

And at his touch a new idea  
Conquered crude, immodest fear,  
And that motive kept my arm still  
When neither pride nor reason could.

I went home to a careless lover,  
Having done a brave thing once for love.

## Delicacy

Once upon a time, a stableboy  
Looked on a princess chaste  
With longing eyes. The gentle princess  
Turned her blossoming face  
Away--until, risking all, he spoke,  
Then caught her by the waist  
And kissed her. Upon his knees he kissed her,  
Savoring her maiden taste:  
Bluepoint oysters dipped in honey,  
Jellied truffle consommé,  
Eel and octopus in aspic,  
Alligator heart pâté,  
Caviare of butterfly,  
And tongue of nightingale glacé.

## Delayed Gratification

I've been giving all of this some thought,  
And finally I've come to some conclusions.  
This whole fucking thing is just too fraught!  
You give me psychological contusions.  
"Soon," you say, but days turn into weeks  
And still I'm making do with masturbation;  
Aloof, you smile--behind those cunning cheeks  
You're getting off on all my aggravation.  
You love to torture me with dirty tricks  
And tempt me with the press of your erection:  
Clearly you're one of these game-playing pricks,  
And this is doomed. Just one more failed connection.  
You're nothing but a manic pussy-tease.  
But I adore the mind-fuck. More, oh, please--

## Dorothy to Scarecrow (I)

They said you like me, but I know they lied.  
You love me. Otherwise there'd be no sense  
In chance, or wine, or brains, or in that kick  
Of blood when I discover I'm beside  
You. If you're tepid, then I'm stupid, hence  
This hollow melancholy means I'm sick,  
That's all. You began this. You're the one who tried  
To horn in on my trip, who jumped the fence  
And clowned for me. I laughed. Then thick  
And fast I came at last, and then I cried.  
I'd only dreamed it. There I lay, still tense,  
And felt my folly clench and stick.

## Dorothy to Scarecrow (II)

When first you asked to travel by my side,  
I wasn't sure--but then you jumped the fence  
and capered for me. I had no defense;  
I loved the way you staggered, skipped, and shied.  
If you're brainless, then I guess I'm dense,  
since more than once you saved my worthless hide;  
but you and I feel thicker things than pride  
after that carnival experience:  
midgets and monkeys and eyes gingham-dyed,  
rubies and bubbles with witches inside,  
multitudes cheering until we all cried.  
Wait, what? A dream? No dream is that intense.  
We shared such longing, color, glee, suspense--  
didn't we? Weren't you there? It makes no sense . . .

## Heterosexism

Two gay guys are walking down the street  
When this gorgeous naked woman goes by on the other side.

Her skin is like the petal of the wood anemone.  
Her mouth pouts pansy-pink.  
Her neck ashames the arum lily.

Her hair adorns her like the froth of crema  
Decorates espresso.

Her ribs: a plinth on which her breasts are raised.  
The nook behind her hip: an invitation to a cheek.

Her fingers, though her hands are empty,  
Seem to curve around a certain precious something . . .

Her clothing, if she had some, would be grateful to be near her.

You worship her. Yet if you glance at her a certain way,  
She'll drop at once to her sweet knees before you.

She is smutty and celestial.

She moves in a holy sizzle.

So the one gay guy turns to the other gay guy and says,  
You know, it's times like these I wish I was a lesbian.

## Habitrail

there's  
absolutely nothing I can do to stop this fantasizing  
after I'm in bed about you kissing me and licking me and  
stroking me and stoking me and tickling and suckling and  
all those other k-sound verbs that really aren't respectable which  
isn't even mentioning the nouns I know with k-sounds for the  
part of your anatomy that truly is delectable or  
so I keep imagining although I wouldn't know because you  
never let me near enough to see you let alone to taste you  
even though you promised me one day we'd get together and do  
things to one another that are barely even legal well I  
thought you promised maybe not but all the same it seems to me that  
when somebody asks you to come over to his house at night and  
plays his damn guitar for you and drinks a quart of wine with you and  
turns you on by telling sixty-eight erotic anecdotes and  
finally unfolds himself to sprawl upon the kitchen floor a  
sexy interruption of the geometric pattern of the black and white linoleum well  
I don't know but I would say that constitutes an invitation  
jeez I only wish that I could stop all this remembering the  
thought of you I have to say is getting kind of irritating  
scurrying and squeaking like a gerbil in a Habitrail a-  
round and round and round and round and round and round and round and  
on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and  
on and on and on you know it's very inconvenient that the  
brain is so long-winded that it never has to stop to breathe the  
brain's a videographer who never caps the camera lens which  
means that when I shut my eyes to try to get some sleep at least my  
lids begin the screening of the circuitry of scrutiny the  
feature presentation is you looking at me looking at you  
looking at me looking at you looking at me looking at so  
Nietzsche has an aphorism saying in the end one only  
loves one's own desire not the object of desire which I  
must say might be true because the one thing on my mind these days has  
not been strictly speaking you but me and my obsession with you  
which is good for poetry but definitely smacks a bit of  
solipsism solipsism solipsism solipsism  
actually you know it's rather comforting to me this whole i-  
dea that you don't exist except inside my brain because I  
know although I can't control the you who seems to be outside me  
there's a presence in my head that I have christened after you it  
answers when I call your name it condescends to look like you it  
graciously arrays itself in willful eyes and nervous hands it  
says the things you said to me it does the things you did to me and  
better still it kindly does the things you've never done to me and  
never will and never will and never will     oh  
there are many uses one can find for an homunculus a  
charming little pet that one can cherish and apostrophize and  
though I guess you might object to living only in my mind there's  
absolutely nothing you can do



## Acrostic Sestina

Love is rare and precious, or it is not love.  
Only love that coyly thwarts its own possession  
Will flash the searing brilliance that consumes.  
Love lurks below within a studded mine,  
Orientally awaiting you. Find  
Where it lies and excavate; discount the cost.

Portraits of beloved, famous faces cost  
Rembrandtian sums at Sotheby's. Should love  
Itself be less? The Titian you may find  
Cherished in the epicure's possession  
Exists alone for him--he whispers "Mine . . ."  
Secluded, solemn, ardent, all-consumed.

Gourmandize love. Let no amateur consume.  
Acquire an expert palate for the costly  
Liquid known as love; we must undermine  
Oafish pretensions to knowledge of love.  
Revel in love's bouquet, and take possession  
E'en of love's dregs spit out for flies to find.

Earth's highest kings of old were wont to find  
Venetian glass the highest of its kind, and to consume  
Each morsel from a platter whose possession  
Riches only could command. Of royal cost  
Your love should likewise be: crystal love,  
T'ang love, bone love, gold love, love from Indian mine.

Harris tweed, Arran wool, silk and ermine  
Is love. No tailor you will ever find  
Nor celebrated couturier makes love  
Gorgeous enough. A connoisseur consumer  
Insists anyway on love, though this costs  
Several fittings ere you take possession.

One perfect love is one supreme possession.  
Never settle; vow "Love shall be mine."  
Search long, never thinking of the cost;  
Ache, yearn, crave, burn, go, return, blister to find  
Love. Let your heart's incessant quest consume  
Every cent of strength, of joy, for love.

Not only you: I, too, must learn love's cost.  
O Muse, consume me--show me how to find  
Wealth enough to make that dear possession mine.

## Metro Sestina

I bought a Farecard for a dollar-eighty,  
enough to get from Rosslyn to the Metro  
Center. My red line train arrived in fury.  
I got on. No one in D.C. would know  
me from Eve--I'd come for that very reason;  
to rest from the strain of the daily lie:

acquaintance. We so rarely need to lie  
to strangers on a train. My dollar-eighty  
lets me ride, and no one asks the reason,  
or if there's none. That's why I love the Metro.  
Plus it's clean! The New York subway, you know,  
isn't--so says my Brooklyn friend, with fury.

And city spaces spark in me a fury  
of fantasy; I make a fancy lie  
(or could) about each person I don't know  
the turnstile stopped me. No dollar-eighty  
had been credited to me. Well, the Metro  
machine must have malfunctioned for some reason.

But the kiosk man sure didn't reason  
on those lines. With suppressed official fury,  
he informed me that he'd been a Metro  
employee for years, and had heard the lie  
"But sir, I really paid my dollar-eighty"  
too many times. "I know," he said. "I know."

"I'll let you go," he said, "but still, I know."  
At that I swear to God I lost all reason.  
"Take another goddamn dollar-eighty,  
then!" I shouted in a sudden ugly fury.  
He wouldn't. He made me leave with the "lie."  
I kicked his kiosk as I left the Metro.

What had happened to me in the D. C. Metro?  
A stranger, after all, can't ever know  
just when you tell the truth and when you lie.  
One must acknowledge that, in simple reason.  
I couldn't believe I'd become such a Fury--  
I'd screamed, over a measly dollar-eighty.

I didn't cheat the Metro of \$1.80.  
But I could. I lie to friends, for smaller reasons,  
and the fury of it is, they never know.

## I Am an Audience

We will not participate in poetry.  
Is she a cheerleader?  
No, she is not.  
Are we a pep squad?  
No, we are not, and there is no team here now to cheer for.  
Is she a preacher?  
No, she is not.  
Are we a flock?  
No, we are not sheep, un-cloned or otherwise.  
Is she a motivational speaker?  
No, she is not.  
Are we in need of motivation?  
No, we are not. We do not need any more motivations than the ones we have already, thank you.  
She is a poet, or a performance artist or something.  
We are not poets.  
Let her do the speaking.  
We will not speak.  
We will listen. We are good at listening. Afterward  
    we will discuss what we have heard, but not  
    now.  
Now we will not speak--though we might laugh, or go "woo-hoo."  
We will maintain our dignity.  
We are not poets; we are people.

We are not poets; we are people.  
We are men and women.  
I am a woman.  
I am a man.  
I am not a girl; I am a boy.  
I am not a boy; I am a girl.  
I am not your friend; I am your girlfriend.  
I am not your boyfriend; I am your lover.  
I am not your lover; I am in love with you.  
I am not in love with you; I am your friend.  
I am a quarter Irish on my mother's side.  
I am the descendant of African kings.  
I am an accidental baby.  
I am a Republican.  
I am a poststructuralist.  
I am lactose intolerant.  
I am gay. I am not gay.  
I am a dog person.  
I am naturally tidy.  
I am moved to tears by moonrise.  
I am tired.

I am too tired.  
I am too old for this.  
I am too young for this.  
I was a Jew; now I am not.  
I was a Catholic; now I am not.  
I was an unbeliever; now I am one of the faithful.  
I was lost; now I am found.  
I am suffering from PMS.  
I am not either. PMS does not exist.  
Not unless I say it does.

Not unless I say I am.

Take your pick.  
Take your pick and play awhile, if you are a musician.  
I am not a musician.  
There is no instrument between us.

But actually, you know, there is.

Language is my instrument, and language is between us.  
Especially the words "I am," they are between us.  
Let there be nothing between us.  
Let there be no language in the next moment.  
Let there be no sound at all.  
Let us try not to think one word, lest that one word come to possess us.  
Let us be silent.

...  
...  
...  
...  
...

It is difficult to be silent.  
It is not natural to us to be silent, save when we are  
    alone, or when we are  
    asleep--both of which are very good to be,  
    but not forever.  
Sooner or later there must be sound.  
Sooner or later there must be words.  
Since there must be sound, let there be music when there can be.  
Since there must be words, let there be poetry when there can be.

When you burn your finger, what you do is  
put your finger in your mouth, so it  
can touch your tongue.

The tongue cannot quite heal, but it can  
soothe.

Your language is your tongue, and it can  
soothe.

Under the right conditions the tongue can  
also stimulate.

I want you to give me something.  
I want you to give me some poetry.  
I want you to give me a "yes."

Will you give it?

Will you give it?

Will you give it?

Will you give it?

Will you give it?

You have given me your poetry.  
Your "yes" is poetry, and you have given it  
to me,  
and now the only word possessing us is  
"yes."

Now you have given me your poetry,  
and I have given you mine.

Thank you.

## Myself as a Verb

A name is a noun,  
A noun is a name.  
A noun doesn't change,  
It's always the same.

A noun is a place,  
A noun is a thing.  
A noun is a word  
Without any zing.

A noun doesn't do,  
A noun only is.  
So I prefer verbs!  
They bubble and fizz.

I specially like  
Imperative mood:  
"Go there and do that!"  
(Though maybe it's rude.)

My name is a noun,  
But that isn't me.  
A flexible verb's  
What I want to be.

Of course I would lose  
My capital "A,"  
But I wouldn't care  
'Cause then I could say:

amanda your bed,  
amanda your room,  
amanda the mop,  
amanda the broom,

amanda your teeth,  
amanda your skin,  
amanda your cheeks,  
amanda your chin,

amanda your soap,  
amanda your brush,  
amanda your gel,  
amanda your blush,

amanda your bra,  
amanda your shirt,  
amanda your tights,  
amanda your skirt,

amanda to school,  
amanda to sleep,  
amanda to work,  
amanda to sleep,

amanda to church,  
amanda to sleep,  
amanda to France,  
amanda to sleep,

amanda TV,  
amanda the tube,  
amanda the box,  
amanda the cube,

amanda the web,  
amanda the link,  
amanda the pen,  
amanda the ink,

amanda a book,  
amanda a book,  
amanda a book,  
amanda a book,

amanda the check,  
amanda the cash,  
amanda the debt,  
amanda the stash,

amanda the plugs,  
amanda the wires,  
amanda the lugs,  
amanda the tires,

amanda the carb,  
amanda the choke,  
amanda the oil,  
amanda the smoke,

amanda the clock,  
amanda the phone,  
amanda the rock,  
amanda the stone,

amanda the tree,  
amanda the seed,  
amanda the rose,  
amanda the weed,

amanda the tick,  
amanda the flea,  
amanda the slug,  
amanda the bee,

amanda the gnat,  
amanda the bat,  
amanda the rat,  
amanda the cat,

amanda the purr,  
amanda the paws,  
amanda the fur,  
amanda the claws,

amanda the egg,  
amanda the flour,  
amanda the milk,  
amanda one hour,

amanda the soy,  
amanda the leaf,  
amanda the pork,  
amanda the beef,

amanda some chips,  
amanda some fries,  
amanda some cakes,  
amanda some pies,

amanda some wine,  
amanda some hops,  
amanda some rum,  
amanda some schnapps,

amanda the club,  
amanda the bar,  
amanda the fan,  
amanda the star,

amanda the word,  
amanda the page,  
amanda the song,  
amanda the stage,

amanda the folk,  
amanda the funk,  
amanda the blues,  
amanda the punk,

amanda a tap,  
amanda a slap,  
amanda a snap,  
amanda a clap,

amanda your arm,  
amanda your leg,  
amanda your John,  
amanda your Meg,

amanda the day,  
amanda the night,  
amanda the dark,  
amanda the light,

amanda the sun,  
amanda the stars,  
amanda the moon,  
amanda to Mars,

amanda the fence,  
amanda the rail,  
amanda the road,  
amanda the trail,

amanda the hold,  
amanda the grip,  
amanda the fall,  
amanda the slip,

amanda the strength,  
amanda the guts,  
amanda the spunk,  
amanda the nuts,

amanda the joke,  
amanda the pun,  
amanda the knife,  
amanda the gun,

amanda the bruise,  
amanda the stab,  
amanda the sore,  
amanda the scab,

amanda the clot,  
amanda the clump,  
amanda the stub,  
amanda the stump,

amanda the break,  
amanda the sprain,  
amanda the burn,  
amanda the strain,

amanda the peace,  
amanda the fight,  
amanda the grace,  
amanda the blight,

amanda a girl,  
amanda a boy,  
amanda the thrill,  
amanda the joy,

amanda a hug,  
amanda a kiss,  
amanda the rage,  
amanda the bliss,

amanda a laugh,  
amanda a sigh,  
amanda the truth,  
amanda the lie,

amanda your guilt,  
amanda your shame,  
amanda your hate,  
amanda your blame,

amanda your fear,  
amanda your grief,  
amanda your doubt,  
amanda belief,

amanda your soul,  
amanda your brain,  
amanda your love,  
amanda your pain,

amanda your birth,  
amanda your death,  
amanda your life,  
amanda your breath,

amanda asleep,  
amanda awake--  
Amanda, enough!  
That's all they can take.



## The Intact

Whatever has been touched remains itself,  
The brush of fingers causing just a shudder.  
Mere contact never altered something else.

The blood is blood, in blushes or in welts;  
The breath, the breath, although the breather smothers;  
Whatever has been crushed remains itself.

An unborn child can kick as though its flesh  
Were free as ours, confined within its mother:  
Mere bondage never stilled a someone else.

No matter what two bodies thought was felt  
When part of one was tucked inside the other,  
Whatever has been fucked remains itself.

A few new canyons have been carved upon my self  
By you. That's all. All landscapes shaped by lovers  
Merely shift: here is never somewhere else.

There you sit. I may touch you--kill some cells,  
Cause cataclysms--but we'll both recover.  
Whatever can be touched remains itself;  
Mere contact cannot alter something else.

## Ghazal for the Belly Dancers

A well in the shadows, shy as a woman;  
A sinuous river, sly as a woman.

He wishes his opium lover were poison,  
Languidly craving to die of a woman.

The navel regards you, the omphalos sees,  
The clever abdominal eye of a woman.

She drinks a forbidden oracular wine,  
And dreams of a secret denied to a woman.

Supple, curvetting, the nightingale preens  
And is mute. Below comes the cry of a woman.

The fragrance of roses arouses the air,  
As mortal and sweet as the sigh of a woman.

An intricate flick of desire in the belly  
Urges a woman to lie with a woman.

Firmly the beat keeps its grip on the song,  
As fat and as strong as the thighs of a woman.

Pierce her with rubies, tattoo her with gold,  
Pain is the coin that will buy you a woman.

I am a dancer--a sultan, a beggar,  
A prophet, a slave. And I am a woman.

## Spring Flowers As Anxious As I Am

Distressed daffodils feel unyellow near  
    forsythia bushes with their big smug glare;  
lithe iris, flipping a little rippling skirt-sass,  
    keep calyx torsos tense, distended, miser-taut;  
worried cherry blossoms edge close, obscuring  
    branch, bark, knot--such unacknowledgeable sins;  
and, precarious, yet with an air of nonchalance,  
    unstable lilac helices exhale cool fumes.

## Drinking Coffee

Sundered by light,  
sullen,  
I crave my lidded casket.

Silver voices sear,  
mirror eyes will not reflect me,  
and every driven handshake seems a slivered stake.

Vengeance. I invoke again  
that black bat heart,  
that rabid, rapid-flapping heart,

and vessels dark I drain, red-eyed, of gore.

## The Groupie's Song

Get the guy who plays guitar to love you  
and he'll strum you into amped reverberation,  
get the boy who plays the bass to love you  
and he'll pluck you into low-end fibrillation,  
get the dude who plays the drums to love you  
and he'll bang you into tintinnabulation,  
but if you snag the singer with the melting voice  
he'll make you love him. You won't have a choice.

## Marry Me

Probably possibly probably possibly  
Absolutely positively  
Probably possibly probably possibly  
Marry me marry me marry me marry me

Rob the slob he hawked a gob  
And that was how he lost his job  
His wife said Honey we got to have money,  
Quit being such a gelatinous blob!

Bouncy, sleek, and pink of cheek  
The jogging angels make you weak  
Sore and stunned at thirty-one  
The sagging hags will make you run.

Jack is a practicing anal retentive  
Jill is a certified passive aggressive  
Both are neurotic, repressed, and compulsive  
They're madly in love but it's kinda repulsive.

Gimme a nickel to call up my mama  
And tell her he wanted to, now he don't wanna  
Gimme a pencil to write to my daddy  
And tell him he took me but now he won't have me.

Probably possibly probably possibly  
Absolutely positively  
Probably possibly probably possibly  
Marry me marry me marry me marry me

Ozzie put Harriet into a chariot  
Carted her carcass away.  
If you can't carry it, better not marry it  
Ricky was heard to say.

Israel Palestine Jordan and Syria  
I never heard such revolting criteria  
I can do pretty and clever and kind  
If you want a virgin you're out of your mind.

Viewed and wooed and wedded and bedded  
Now the bride has hit her stride  
Wear and tear and fear and beer  
And then the whore will hit the floor.

Freudian doctors of human psychology  
Say that libido is part of biology:  
If you are married and miserable, probably  
All of your problems are due to monogamy.

Probably possibly probably possibly  
Absolutely positively  
Probably possibly probably possibly  
I dunno I dunno I dunno I dunno

Probably possibly probably possibly  
Absolutely positively  
Probably possibly probably possibly  
Marry me marry me marry me marry me  
Marry me marry me marry me marry me.