

WIND ON THE SURFACE (and other poems re: marriage)

...a year after the wedding....

If the King holds force; he can open the river and disperse blocks on the surface with his wind power.

Decree: the following problems are identified by the King; to be posted and solved; subjects may work on one at a time; no specific deadline as of the date of posting:

Don't make things a big deal out of proportion to how I feel.

Don't make me walk on eggshells because you make too big a deal of everything.

Don't make one little thing into something else, like it is cheating or something.

Don't be anal about my throne (recliner) and move it.

Don't be anal about my thrones (recliner and patio chair); don't move them.

Clean up after yourself in the kitchen; you leave crumbs after breakfast;

I have to clean up after you when you cook, and even though I tell you I will, you should understand that I resent it.

Don't be defensive of any tiny little thing.

Use leftovers; you waste food.

you shouldn't need to cook something different every night.

you should be able to re-use coffee grounds a second time.

Don't misstate and embellish all minor things.

You've been told many times about my throne, the kitchen, etc. and you don't listen, fix it, or change.

A King feels that these little things are nothing;

Don't think I'm calling you a bitch or that you're not intelligent.

Don't be careless about a lot of things; don't lack humility.

Because you're a female you think you're not wrong; you're too sensitive.

Only 1% of you does little human things that bug me.

I'm afraid of you because you're too female, too sensitive.

Don't get excited.

Don't expect me to know everything; don't get set off too easily.

Don't put the dishrag over the center of the sink; put it on the faucet where I want it put.

You don't understand why I need things the way I want them to be.

You don't acknowledge; you don't use reason; you're too independent; you can't accept anything, whether it is right, wrong, or indifferent.

You lack humility.

You have childhood issues, which are a problem.

You can't accept anybody questioning you about anything.

You are unreasonable; you are out of control.

You have a problem with "constant criticism".

You are anxious and self-absorbed.

You are over-the-top about everything.

Don't make me feel like an asshole for bringing all this to your attention.

Don't worry; I have no plans to kick your ass out.

I'm sorry that you found my attempts to find my old girlfriend from when I was a teenager; I want you to understand that I need to know where she is and how she is faring; I need to keep her picture on my computer.

Be grateful I let you write and take care of your flowers when you want to; appreciate your life is better than it was before I met you and took you in.

Don't be insecure, which I believe is what you are.

THE WORST OF TIMES

A too quiet Sunday,
Almost too cold to snow;
The air falls in frozen imitation.
A solitary dove sits on the fence, feathers
Fluffed to keep him warm.
You sit silently reading another book---
Several at once to keep you constantly distracted,
And to keep me from intruding on your self-contained world.
Only texts from your son about the muted
Football game arouse your attention for a moment or two.
I wander in a ghostly way from room to room, occasionally
Glancing at your stony profile, your feet crossed
In your father's slippers....
The life you have claimed as your birthright now....
No matter what it costs, you will resume his life where he left it,
And finish it without me.
I wish the snow would fall more heavily, like a cold shroud
To cover me with its icy lament.
For I have no words to gather the silence around us,
Make us whole again.....and it was always just
My words that you loved.....not me.

LOVE OF WAR

When we were together I believed

if our war ended,

we would echo a whimper, not a bang.

I whimper now....long after the last banging blow.

I remain in shock our last battle was so violent, so relentless,

and we used weapons we didn't know we had.

With words we shot, stabbed, speared, threw, stomped, hurled stones, and burned our home to the ground....

Aftermath of war: homesickness, battle fatigue, shell shock.....ptss.....moral injury.

I have them all..... you, too?

I have open wounds....some healed ones....scar tissue strong as steel knives.

We were so young when you returned from that Asian war....wounded,

.....in spirit.....both of us wounded....but you more deeply, I believe, than I.

We believed we could make a good life, even with our disabilities, our casualty count....

...the collateral damage behind us.....believing we could heal....

....love and dreams were enough.....so much love, so many dreams, once....

...before the last war--the one we didn't survive....

A paeon to love, to war?....a plea, a prayer with drenched palms?....

for absence, to invoke presence?....presence before the wars.....

You appear in my dreamsnightmares,

I wake, angry....haunted dreams.....

I wonder where you are,

if you still are....ghostly memories.

If I knew where you are, my dreams

would be sweeter, younger, innocent.....even though we're now old,

the rest of this life would be less restless.....

As if we've forgiven each other our failure to love....

as hoped, as promised.....

As if we'd forgotten the battles, the wars...

again willing to pay the price...

of love....of war.

POSING AS AN ALCHEMIST

Behind the scrim of wealth,
He confessed to himself
Happiness...
As he compulsively gambled on fame.
He seduced himself,
More than many women,
Playing violin for Venetian theater.
Law and soldiering opened the curtain....
to scribe in Rome,
to puppet cardinals,
to spy for enemies,
to translate a libertine library.
He posed as an alchemist....
Seeking gold's secrets....
Only to find the baseness of his metal,
Lover to and loved by no one.

POETRY OF MOTION

Lying sleepless each night,
Unable to quiet jerks of remorse,
Restless dread, pacing through the past, indifferent to the future,
Our world in chaos....I forgot...
Again....
chaos is illusory,
fear of being overwhelmed a mirage,
No exits....helpless to alter
intransigence, stubborn divisiveness,
the lure of hate, the energizing passion of conflict, headless and heedless....
All are imagined traps.
Doves fly away, olive branches burn, prayer pipes break.
We slash each other, arms crossed, daggers drawn,
Eyes brimming with vitriol, determined to win the war...harpoon the enemy,
Across the table, across the room, across the country,
Across the ocean of despair gathering us all into a tidal wave....
Of
the poetry of such turbulent motion?
I fight myself.....unable to dismiss
the seduction of doom.
The siren call to fall down into the
murky lake like flimsy ashes of burned paper....
gathered by a tornado,
swirled by desert winds...fragments disappearing in the eddys of hot wind.
...there may be no escape, no heroic rescue,

but there is hope...

behind the bats flying into our faces,

above the swords dripping with our blood,

lying patiently in the dusty creases of the unhinged box...

waiting for us to tire of our folly.

THIS LATE LIFE

We began with hope of years together when we married

To learn who we've become in the years we've lived without each other,

To find what we lost on the carriage wheel of past love,

To mend the flapping shreds of what once was love.

The past still lingers between us like smoke, yet we married for love.

We understand and forgive moments or days when we revive memories of lost love,

When those other loves have not yet left our dreams,

Yet we wake every morning to the stillness of our marriage of love.

We didn't marry in our late aloneness for half a heart....we married for love.

We were beginning to arrange our bodies and minds for the declining years,

Believing we could face them alone, when we quietly found each other.

We longed for an old-fashioned romantic devotion,

....but had lost hope to find, as we looked in wrong places....to the past...

then to each other, when we married for love.

We had scoured the past for love that could have been, might have been, pure and deep for all our years,

But found only empty surfaces, and neither of us wanted emptiness again, half a dream....we wanted a marriage of love.

What remains between us as we begin a slow slippage into long ago memory, as our present ebbs away in drips and stutters?

As a form of memory we write....re-tell stories we've already told....

gather touches, kisses, sounds.... press them like violets between pages of parchment...

hold our slow disappearance like weighty bloodstones instead of dust.

As we watch our shadows grow longer, we are still together here,

Holding the edges of our togetherness from fraying into an empty past..a past when we had not yet found each other...a past before we married for love.