

I LOVE YOU

I love you he said with a voice curdled by the years

I love you and I'm sorry it's been so long...

Liquid time ran through my busy fingers.

I could not stop the flow or quit my project to get a cup.

Remember when...

Then comes the list of long told memories baked and turned over years of telling,

Adventures of lighter, stronger, younger men who knew little enough to fear and so acted without thought or apology.

They always say they love you

They always say they love you

They always say they love you

Then they die.

Now years later comes the I love you from one who traded licks and dared me to suck a egg,

One who I stood with shoulder by,

Who cursed fear or praised brutal valor as other tough guys got bloodied and beat up at the fights,

When love was known as a sweaty and orgasmic thing and fine,

Not something we said to one another, not unless succeeded by an ass kicking.

But now it's I love you.

They always say they love you
They always say they love you
They always say they love you
Then they die.

And I suddenly, like an unseen punch to my gut, get the reason why --
A life is over and a returned I love you justifies the pain of leaving,
the loss of all that is or could have been.

I love you returned says it was not a waste or a mistake,
To take a wife
To start that job
To focus on kids and strive a lifetime to feed them all,
To drive up the coast to Myrtle each July 4 and feel the strength of the bullying sun
Though no longer chasing sweetly naked schoolgirls
Through the still warm motel parking lot after dark.

They always say they love you
They always say they love you
They always say they love you
Then they die.

Now it's I love you to know it was
Not a wrong turn never corrected but an impact,
That never before stated love itself,
Like a diploma tied with a bow and presented on the last day,
Is the only thing that matters.
So now I understand, my angle switching with the decades, and I give freely to the cause --

I love you too

And I am

Sorry for your prognosis,

Sorry you're going to die.

No I'm sure it doesn't hurt that much.

It'll be over before you know it.

Yes, I remember, I remember it all.

You made my life a joy to live.

They always say they love you

They always say they love you

They always say they love you

Then they die.

Who will I call then now you're gone?

Touring the Glory in a Thousand Years

And there's the Coliseum where they say tens of thousands of citizens
Stood and growled and cheered for their splendid champions
Who met the best warriors in the world on Sundays
A thousand years ago,
When life was fluid and rich for most
And need's lean sinew lay quiet
Beneath a growing layer of civilized fat.
The fanatics ignored the inconsequential others,
Those sick and hungry who are always with you
Who finally spoke,
The previously speechless hordes toppling the massive stadium stones,
They who came to end the
Competitive spell of madness.

Before the ruin came
With the uprisings of those enslaved
And starved of hope,
Before the land was wrecked
Its life sucked away,
Its fragile balances rudely trounced by superior minds,
Before the world lost its tight focus
And spun away at an irregular pace,
As greed and arrogance disguising tragic ignorance
Trumped life and joy and any thought of love.

And there's the Forum, its topless tilted columns
The splayed rotten teeth of an antique skull,
Here where people also gathered
Perhaps to worship a god or other men
Who reminded them of what wonders a man could do.
Its shell too adumbrating the age old splendor,
The glory that once stood.
Now submerged in the rising sea
That at high tide when the full faced moon
Tugs hardest, makes of it a home
For larval life, a shelter for tiny prey.

Before the ruin came
With the uprisings of those enslaved
And starved of hope,
Before the land was wrecked
Its life sucked away
Its fragile balances rudely trounced
By superior minds
Before the world lost its tight focus
And spun away at an irregular pace,
As greed and arrogance
Disguising tragic ignorance
Trumped life and joy and any thought of love.

And then the Hollywood sign which still remains
Some Os missing replaced by e and i and r
Looming over the dusty desert floor from its mountain perch,
An Acropolistic temple of letters once touting beauty and splendor
Now a warning to those who tread the waste beneath its spidery shadow
That greatness is imagined,
A dream outlasted by flesh crushing stone,
That awe is transient as are the drops of rain
Which have ceased to fall.
That what was once will not be again
So treat the moment as eternity,
While moments are yet yours.

Before the ruin came
With the uprisings of those enslaved
And starved of hope,
Before the land was wrecked
Its life sucked away,
Its fragile balances rudely trounced by superior minds
Before the world lost its tight focus
And spun away at an irregular pace,

As greed and arrogance disguising tragic ignorance
trumped life and joy and any thought of love.

YET

I woke sudden in recovery

Quiet business all around.

Faceless uniforms monitored progress --

This one fallow, this one ripe.

As focus came, I felt a nascent joy remembered as a past voice.

At once I felt the loss of memory and desire --

No binding duty, no forward plan.

Instead a noiseless celebration lay ahead

A wedding feast, no a birth of new life

Unexpected and unforeseen.

In the twilit room, I lost all weight of thought or motion

Exhilarated I floated up and pulled the mask away.

Ready to leap from the metal bed,

I opened my mouth to sing out

When an arm before unseen crossed over my chest and pushed me back

While a voice said matter of factly -- not yet.

And I returned again to dreary sleep --

To dreams of failed acts and ended loves,

To efforts continued and questions unanswered,

Where the joys of the past equal the sorrows

As days stretch on and life grows shorter than it was.

Once more I woke, this time back in the room I had left at midnight, now 3am.

Beside me stood one in nurse's uniform with long waves of blue electric hair
studying the monitors in the darkness --

A woman at first, I thought as they all had been, but then saw him as a clean shaven young
man,

His face, a moon aglow in reflected light, impassive and still.

To break the silence, I asked how he was doing and he turned to respond but did not.

He looked down as if to say, I am here. But no words were given.

That was all. No voice. No expression. No promise or condemnation.

Only dark crater eyes that said I am here.

And I returned again to dreary sleep.

To dreams of failed acts and ended loves,

To efforts continued and questions unanswered,

Where the joys of the past equal the sorrows

As days stretch on and life grows shorter than it was.

When the sun arose and the noisy world returned, no one knew this person, unheard of on the
5th floor or elsewhere.

No men had been on duty, certainly no blue haired ones,

Just another mystery at St. John's we'll say.

I do not know what subtle pranks a morphine drip can cause,

Or what vignettes evolve from death's close call.

Now I live to see when yet will be and what must happen first.

Beneath the cool and distant moon that does not speak

but is always nearby

in the darkness.

And daily I return unhappily again to sleep.
To dreams of failed acts and ended loves,
To efforts continued and questions unanswered,
Where the joys of the past equal the sorrows
As days stretch on and life grows shorter than it was.