

## THE MOTHER

A manuscript,  
Seven chapters.  
Six were outstanding,  
Although at the time  
She saw not flowers  
But flaws.  
Which she then nurtured.  
She fretted.  
She begrudged herself  
All happiness;  
She took  
No joy.

But, oh, how wonderful.  
The seventh  
Was truly a treasure.  
How delicately the letters flowed  
'Til page after page was filled  
Only with music.  
Upon which the words fluttered  
And danced  
And smiled out at the world,  
And filled all those  
Who gazed upon it  
With heartfelt laughter and joy.

Within it  
There was one small paragraph  
Especially carefree and light,  
Yet, somehow to her,  
Not quite perfect enough.  
Her eyes reduced to slits,  
That beheld not dainty phrases.  
Her ears heard nothing  
Of bell-like prose.  
Instead, within her tormented soul  
What was so good appeared twisted –  
Hideous, sneering, jeering.

She would no longer look at it.  
Instead, she cursed it;  
She tore it to pieces,  
Not just the happy paragraph,  
Nor the special chapter,  
But the entire book.  
And she spent all her days  
Tearing the pieces to pieces,  
So that the measure  
Of her lifetime  
Was not the magnificent creation  
That no longer was.

Nor was it nothing,  
The absence of something,  
That might have taken its place.  
Instead, it was a misery  
Whose length and breath and height  
Were boundless.  
She constructed it,  
She embellished it,  
She expanded it,  
Where dwelled not only herself,  
But all those around her,  
Forever.

## BEACH

A man lies still  
 Upon the shore  
     Beside his love  
         He wants no more.

Upon her breast  
     He lays his hand;  
         Alone they rest  
             On smooth, dry sand.

In time he turns  
     He draws her near;  
         He sighs soft sounds  
             So sure, sincere...

...yes, yes, I love you.

The years go by  
     And missiles fall;  
         The great lands die,  
             No life at all.

No bear; no bone;  
     No bud; no leaf.  
         No man; no moan;  
             No mate; no grief.

Just dry, hot air;  
     Just sterile soil.  
         The earth lies bare;  
             The oceans boil.

A grain of sand  
     Where once was beach,  
         Will feel another,  
             But out of reach.

It twists, it strains,  
     It stretches much;  
         It yearns, it pains,  
             So it might touch.

This bit of stone  
     Beneath the ground,  
         Now not alone,  
             Will make a sound...

...yes, yes, I love you.

## MY SON

A son!  
A perfect little human being,  
So precious,  
So wonderful.  
Baseball, picnics, fishing;  
Reading to you every night;  
Saying our prayers together;  
Smiling at your achievements;  
Ever by your side to soften life's struggles.

But wait!  
Have I forgotten?  
Think. Wake up.  
"Take out the garbage!"  
"Lights out, I said, lights out!"  
"Where were you last night?"  
"How many times have I told you?"  
"Not that way!"  
"Stupid!"

Would I be any different?  
Would I be any better?

My son,  
Perfect little human being,  
I loved you so much  
I never had you.

**AYE, AYE  
(TWENTIETH YEAR ANNIVERSARY)**

With what  
Shall I gift thee,  
Now that life  
Has gifted us with so much?

Shall I present thee  
With a flawless diamond,  
Suspended upon  
A braid of gold?

Shall I send thee  
A vial of amber liquid  
To surround thee  
In elegant scent?

Shall I organize  
A band of minstrels  
To play a melody  
Pleasant to thy ear?

Shall I commission  
A canvas of painted roses,  
Exploding hither and yon  
From an exquisite vase?

Shall I envelop thee  
In tailored silks and satins,  
Pretty pearl buttons,  
And polished boots?

Shall I provide thee  
A book of tales of romance  
To move thy heart  
To shed soft tears?

Then what would thou do?  
Display them upon a wall?  
Lock them in a little box?  
Store them in a forgotten closet?

Only to gather dust  
In a house  
Already overwhelmed  
With possessions?

Nay, nay,  
I unfold for thee instead  
From the sanctuary of my soul  
Treasures from our student days.

A droplet of dew  
On a bright, blue morning glory,  
Nodding approval from a vine  
High over a bed.

The odor of cows,  
The essence of leaves  
Kicked up with glee  
On a golden autumn day.

The chirping of crickets,  
Then the bleating of sheep  
As we walked, hands entwined,  
Through the blackest of nights.

Wildflowers and weeds,  
Plucked amid shouts of joy,  
Then displayed with abandon  
In a mangled soda can.

Hand-me-down shirts,  
Faded jeans, worn shoes  
That tumbled free from thee  
The instant of my touch.

The cadence of "I love you's"  
Whispered against thy ear,  
With thee, soft skin aglow,  
Cradled beside me near slumber.

Aye, aye,  
With these then  
I gift thee.  
And twenty years from now...  
Aye, aye, there will be so many more.

**A LIFETIME SPENT**

The stars only blinked  
But when she looked up at the sky,  
She grew terrified  
And so hid in the closet.

After trembling in there for years, a lifetime,  
She found the courage  
To finally come out,  
And look upward.

By then her fear had turned into rage.  
She shook her fist at the heavens.  
“Bastards!” she screamed,  
“You ruined my life!”

And the stars,  
They only blinked.