

## BELOVED SURRENDER

Found stained, shattered among the brittle coral of my life,  
my soul,  
that naked barren essence,  
had been raked along the restive, quivered path of questioned choices.  
What remained, accused and refused the flirting hope of normalcy.  
Caroling the pleated coastline adorned with fragmented passages of time,  
I am tormented by the proximity of decisions and  
the inability to return to what was.

Once cherished and treasured  
now bantered and battered,  
actions remain still as consequences dole out favors never intended.

The constancy in my youth, an illusive intimacy:  
An erratic apparition wandered my ethos in solitude until that day would come that I might be  
companied.

Petitioning myself to bide,  
not for a person but a mythical idea of a thrillingly captivating soul.  
Being a fatuous romantic, this idea held reality in contempt.  
I hungered from infancy,  
a childish dream of perfection enslaved my mind.  
My eyes would feast and devour on beauty while  
my mind held judgement over all who came then departed.  
And they,  
unknowingly judged,  
braced through the gently showered contempt  
I possessed in my heart.  
I measured out to each and each failed that unknown test of which I myself had only incomplete  
assertions.  
A test of which I myself did not fully comprehend the questions!  
(Fantasies often chaperon, then distend and destroy foundations of a glittered conscience.)  
All were turned away.  
Though my mind desired company, my heart continued its fast,  
patient in solitude.  
There would be one and I would wait.  
A woman would come, not brought or bought but encountered with a heart translucent and  
reflective, seductively without guile,  
passing through gossamer avidity into my hunger.  
Then, an invitation  
extended by a common friend, whose time was kept at separate times by her and then by me  
Relationships nestle and sequester time,  
steadily establishing threads of commonality,  
finding root in a person's life until the two establish bonds which do not break but endure.  
And so, a gathering was called; a party. All whom he knew should attend.

Wine was placed and poured to patch the  
empty spaces hanging on the catchings of awkward introductions from the common friend.  
Conversations hitched and fitted,  
puzzling tied tongues between two who did not know or care to know tomorrow the other.  
More conversations flowed and flowered, rooting new beginnings as others imbued and received  
shallow secrets divulged as unborn interests nursed on raw appeal.  
Then I saw her.  
A shared smile was audience to a shimmering knowledge that she, too, harbored a longing vexed  
by those who now checker fading days, drowning in unwanted memories.  
Those memories are piled on heaps of hours that never can return,  
unlike the useless memorabilia collected in times when passion ruled a longing spirit.  
A message in the trace of her finger tips as she passes, a casual flirt across a table permeating the  
space between us.  
I stand, her smile enduring. I satiate my hunger in her pause.  
Another approaches, initiating with her, creating distraction from a momentary respite of self  
imposed exile.  
Unwilling to wonder 'If I round the table and interject.  
To the other, 'Excuse me.'  
To her, 'May I?' Hand out to receive hers.  
An impulsive expectation of acceptance answered by an action. A tender touch of indulgence  
leaves no trace on the skin.  
And with a whisper of question in her eyes, she replies, 'You may.'  
Our fingers lace.  
We walk, communing in silence.  
Her touch radiates, weaving through my hand, my arm, my chest, releasing a binding cord and  
my heart quickens, but only a step.  
I court a glance, she blushes and looks down. A coy reply to a silent query. Unfeigned  
innocence (perhaps excitement?)  
We transit the throng to a corner outside. From the garden, light, too, flirts with shadow, painting  
their changing, abstract, silent songs across faces and bodies.  
We, she and I, do not escape the disinterested shadow play. Disinterested yet dancing, weaving  
around first her eyes, then her lips as she parts them to speak a reply.  
My enquiry remained silent but she offered appreciation. The whim to walk with a stranger was  
often unanswered but,  
'He was an ex. One of many piled memories I wish to cover more quickly than time will allow.  
You rescued me.'  
'A pleasure embraced.' And communion continued with the interchange of our mosaic, carelessly  
volleyed, allowing cautious ownership of fragile tiles, our layered essence, exposed and  
unguarded, a trust established before our first touch.  
While we revealed, opening each to each, enduring expected closures soon to be confessed, the  
shadow dance exposed singular features, a crease at the corner of her eye frayed by her hair,  
teased back by the tips of her nails.  
Again she smiles, this time warmly into my gaze.  
Her beauty, to be sure, held no sway against the majesty and grandeur of the open fields or  
swelling ocean but whose emulation was unattainable.

I was absorbed. Lured by her voice. A zephyr captured essence carried her to me and I breathed in.

Me to her, 'So many bonds are breaking as your voice glides the air to me'

'My heart loosens my tongue and words are free to share with you. These words, I pray you receive for they are not lightly given and they are me'

'I receive only what you wish to share but also that unspoken still will I endure with you.'

'Chasms of time have I created, as a woman wandering, and waited so that this time, we, here, me with you, one day may ascend the spectrum of emotion and prevail, without the drudgery of sodden emptiness that does infect affairs of hearts amidst the banal repetition, inescapable in daily lives.'

'Such repetition, the goings on of man or woman, be manifest in unrelenting fashion. Even so, we, you with me, together, may elude pedestrian repetitions common among those who seek only sufficiency, perishing in their own mediocrity.'

'Would you crave and create something more palpable, capable of transcending the fledgling indifference that warps the heart and mind into apathy?'

'I trust implicitly, not only I but the man with whom I now speak, he too would strain with constancy, with an aching thirst, to satiate our shared emptiness.

An emptiness that until now, plundered the halls and walls and jagged infancy of hope I have suckled, so that my Hope may remain animate when such an opportunity exposed to me the novel promise of a matchless love.'

The power of her words hindered my speech. A bird singing into the dampened darkness of the self-possession. The shadows made manifest my thoughts. Our hands, singular, were held one in the other. My silence translated, I felt light pressure as she held tight. Reaching with her free arm, she touched my shoulder and freed my words that I might express the ebb of doubts previously washing my being and bathing my existence.

I spoke, 'A matchless love, until your words cleansed my heart, seemed vanity, an unattainable ambition. I would strain with constancy, with a shared aching thirst, to assuage dispossessed yearning and incite a matchless love!'

'Though guests be congenial and the aura of events do whisper sweetly throughout the twilight of this day, would we have credited fate with such a possibility that we, you and I, may have found another with whom our hearts may entwine? Not I, on this evening.'

'Nor would I have awaited such a moment, though suffering endless, seemingly fruitless hope, I have, indeed waited. Now, through the mire of my fasting heart, a nascent, shimmering twinkle dawns with the light of your eyes and does suffuse my mind with a feral yearning to cast aside all reservations held in my past.

Reservations that voicelessly emanated from my sullen soul upon those whom have graced me with a presence not desired.

You, you I do desire.

As we impart one to another that which is not manifest, unknown but freely revealed, I feel a heat emanate within me as your body does weep its raw radiance.

In whatever way you do reach me, my desire is not solely carnal.

It is a passion tethered though divergent from simply sensuous aspirations and I wish not to subject you to those previous futile exercises

fettered unfairly by my own starving conscience to those who did not deserve such biased and base treatment."

"Nor do I wish to be subject to such juvenile silliness

cast about by one with a weak or wretched heart.  
Though I expect you have not dealt harshly in the past out of sheer animosity, or from a lean character, but rather,  
as I have shied away from coupling  
yet yearned for the same, it appears to my craving heart, lonely until now and perhaps lonely still,  
that your unintended judgement was from caution, wishing not to dash your heart into oblivion by way of a tragic ending that first took flight in fleshly rapture.  
I do believe that you will gain my heart without pretense and freely we shall be together. I do so hope my hope is not unfounded"  
Pain and fear whispered,  
sifting through her shallow doubt, shadowing her eyes.  
Her voice, colored by regrets of failed attempts, did not saturate the void between us but with wistful accents,  
scored my heart and buoyed the resolve welling within to breach the buried wall behind which her burning desperate desire was detained.  
Conversation continued and did tremble lightly between us.  
The nightly breeze played on the leaves its own conversation of nature.  
Played the leaves and twined her hair faintly so that she might give pause to speech and smile into the warm caress sent down from the night sky.  
The evening aged, it's time marked smoothly, following a mute, pale crescent, gliding and gilding the envelope of nocturnal space.  
Our words assuaged fears that, for so long, plagued harbored aspirations, hidden within the other's heart and this night afforded another time for us.  
The hour came to take leave and retire, though desire was matured and certainty embraced our affections.  
From the garden of her affection, contentment seemed not deceit but  
a surrendered tender vow upon which I thrived.  
She, too, from me did see release from her unease.  
Through time, our fears insisted revelation as we unveiled our buried dread.  
Further we ventured, our emotions, layered and woven, we gave what we cherished .  
Trust caressed the desires and bedded apprehensions,  
transiting the chasms, bridging the barren landscapes left untended except by brokenness.  
Our commitment and affection grew without facade.  
The bonds once claiming our enslaved and jaded hearts did break and lace,  
not once again, our own selves but threaded mutually, coupling our consciousness.  
Through our emotional nakedness, a blossoming emotion toiled our nascent affair.  
Trust established a wicking pool from which we drew our strength.  
From genuine concern she positioned her mind and addressed me,  
the one with whom she did confide,  
withholding nothing,  
entrusting judgement to be balanced by her own pregnable heart,  
"Would we, the two of us as one,  
hold ourselves in contempt by trusting unrestrained passion to be engulfed within the other's open, scarred and empty reservoir?  
Mine in yours and yours in me, to be caressed solely by the other?"

## How Could I Not

Striding through a veil of fatigue toward bitterly imposed  
conclusions.

Dull images of black and gray float, press and pierce the  
surface of my mind.

That day smothers me.

Sleep thrusts my thoughts toward unrealistic images of people  
and beaches while my conscience cries out.

I fall.

Wanting to land, wanting to stand.

Then I wait.

The sun, a strobe light marking each day, kept time with fetid  
dreams and living nightmares.

Bars filtered freedom that seeped into my room.

Freedom that gives life to plans and plants, animals and man.

Freedom that I took away, freedom that was taken from me.

I think about her and why.

Each time I create a new scenario and each time the result is  
the same.

The pulsing sun has blinked - the moon sends blue light.

It falls on me while

thoughts trace through mazes well traveled so that nothing said  
takes me by surprise.

The pathways I followed are wasted and driven by thorns.

Where I walk on virgin ground soon becomes vanquished.

The wind howls through bloody vines calling me back,  
aching to sow the seeds of pain and  
reap the sorrow of my shattered life.

I had sat with her for hours on the crimson shore,  
the swells rising, breaking, rust peeling off the crest of each  
wave when people finally arrived.

I can remember the sun pulling an orange blanket into the sea,  
opening to us a black sky,

filtered by grains of shimmering light, dominated by a full  
moon.

A breeze gently pushed at the silence surrounding us.

I had never seen anybody die, and nobody saw how she died so I  
could not simply state, "Not me."

Because it was me.

A failure to react,  
unable to engage.

An indirect contributor to the rise and demise of  
fantasies and life.

What a person freely dreams is slowly dimmed and crushed  
through endless chores and obligations wearing ruts on once open  
paths of life.

Treading and retreading what must be circles until  
nothing is new and  
nothing new can be expected.  
Numb, withdrawn, unfeeling, alone but  
comfortable in the patterned grooves.  
Towed slowly behind life,  
senses are dulled by the deprivation of monotony.  
She was younger.  
She had not made it to that point.  
Her paths were unworn,  
grass still grew green in the fields of imagination.  
Desire, anticipation, expectancy, elation.  
In each step, ahead of me, vibrant life could be seen.  
The insusceptibility of self, without reservation, no checking  
over the shoulder to see if she was being watched.  
She didn't care, she was free.

Normal introduction:

"Hi, I'm..."

offer handshake

"Hi. Nice to meet you I'm..."

"do you come here often"

"only with my friends"

But we were not introduced  
we were crushed together,  
soldered for such a brief time until death did she part but not  
completely from this world.

She would be always with me.

The only commonality of our greeting,  
a direly requested handshake.

A lifeline I could not throw.

For my lack of nerve, she gave unending regret;  
a guilt and conviction from those that would follow.  
A conviction that would hold me responsible for more than lack  
of action.

A conviction for committing the action.

My mute action translated, in the world's eyes, to a deliberate,  
egregious intent.

We were to meet walking but not together.  
She, ahead of me, on a beach trail lording the edges of a sheer  
cliff;

not of rock but impacted sand worn of patient wind  
along its face, further battered by the crushing blow of storm  
waves at its foundation.

I was almost to her.

With a look back and a light smile, she disappeared over that cliff.

That was the first she spoke to me.

But it wasn't to me.

She was reaching with her voice  
out to anyone and that someone was me.

I heard and responded to the vanishing lady clinging to the  
vanishing ledge.

I responded by running to her.

I responded with calcified ligaments, frozen near the edge,  
unable to advance any further.

Trapped by the openness of something new.

Wanting to help,  
to be there but afraid to move.  
Hoping for someone else to come.  
If I don't reach out she falls.

Reaching out, we fall.

Glinting certainty, smiled it's decay as death was promised for  
either one or two but was certainly promised.

Her eyes clawed at me,  
reaching wide and far,

take a step,

take a knee,

take her hand

while her hands unwillingly degraded the small, sandy ledge.

Wearing ruts in virgin ground.

I could only stand until she fell.

As the ground to which she relentlessly clung eroded beneath her  
fingers

my resolve to risk my life and save hers  
eroded beneath my anchored feet.

I spoke once as I turned to leave.

She screamed "Where are you going?"

"To catch you"

Such a brief time to have something to say

She gave orders

"You can't catch me from down there! Please my fingers,"  
clawing,

"I can't hang on,"

breathing,

"Lie down on your stomach and give me your hand!"

My jaw dropped to speak,

to explain I couldn't,

to rationalize that the sand wouldn't hold and  
we would both fall.

I tried to tell her I was afraid.

"What are you looking at? Save me!"

The orders launched,  
commanding me to act.  
I wanted to,  
but couldn't.  
Standing there,  
impotent,  
I could not feel  
the sun  
heating the ground at my feet.  
I could not see  
the grass  
lightly bending under the oblivious  
soft wind.  
My vision was focused  
on her pleading eyes and  
the words being thrown from her mouth  
pelting me,  
scarring on contact,  
pulling at my shoulders,  
trying to drag me forward,  
to free the anchor from my legs.  
I could see only her.  
As she cried to me, the ground below called her name,  
I heard it beckoning,  
promising safety.  
Looking down she heard it's plea and, back to me,  
"Don't let me fall, my fingers..."  
I know!  
My mouth only open,  
my mind screaming the words,  
You said that!  
"I can't..."

ah.  
breathe.  
Release.

I could only move when I no longer heard her screaming,  
when I heard the sand below receive her.  
I went to see her.  
I went to be the first to pay my respects.  
I went to say I'm sorry.

No one was there to watch her, catch her;  
only the ground.  
I abdicated her debt to me  
by doing nothing.  
After her strength gave way,  
mine returned and I could go down.



I could descend in safety  
walking around the side of the cliff.  
Rounding the bend of the cliff  
hoping for movement but seeing  
only the result of my shame.  
I knelt beside her and cried.  
Cried for her life,  
cried for my impotence and inability.  
I sat with her,  
my hand resting on her forehead,  
blank eyes looking without condemnation,  
but I wondered.  
Had it been there during her fall,  
seething at me for my inaction or  
was there only confusion and the Question,  
"Why?"  
Why didn't I move?  
Why did I only watch?  
Company and accusers arrived to question  
with questions I could not answer.  
"What happened?"  
"She fell"  
"I'm calling the police" and "From where"  
I looked to the top of the cliff  
"How" and "What's her name?"  
"I don't know?" to both questions  
"How could you not know? What the hell is that?"  
I stared only at the horizon as the sun crushed the sky into  
open sea,  
repeating their questions in my mind.