



GOSPEL

Nat Burns

Gospel

by

Nat Burns

Troubadour Books by Regal Crest

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ISBN 978-1-61929-091-4 (eBook)

eBook Conversion March 2013

Cover design by Donna Pawlowski

Published by:

Regal Crest Enterprises, LLC

229 Sheridan Loop

Belton, TX 76513

Find us on the World Wide Web at <http://www.regalcrest.biz>

Published in the United States of America

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Regal Crest for welcoming erotic poetry and short prose from a usually long-winded romance novelist. I would also like to thank my editor, and friend, Patty Cronin. She always does a great job.

Dedication

I'd like to dedicate this book to all the women who inspired the work. You probably know who you are.

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Genesis

We Desire...

Book One

Straight.
Protestations. Limitations.
Boxes are square
with brutal corners—lines.
Curves lead the mind gently
into a day of acceptance, of tolerance.
Love curves eternally...

but falls off the edges of straight.
Stars aren't really made of points.
The curves of their shoulders are made
sharp by perception
from a distance; a place far away.

Book Two

Sometimes we never touch
but properly circle – politely
spinning and swaying around
the hub of our passion,
lightly gossiping with words.
Casual hugging seems the mainstay
among the fluttery females who
include us as one of their own.
Insubstantial butterflies.

The ritual passes swiftly.

But you
with hot eyes piercing
and I, trembling in your solar wind,
know better than to chance it
If we gave voice to the tinder,
allowed the furnace of our touch by
casually pressing breast to breast,
cheek to cheek...

Hiroshima would pale in comparison

Book Three

She called out

“Cactus woman!”
and I answered,
turning spines honed tight by childhood
just so,
an old armor remantled.

But her eyes caught me
before I was ready,
held me tighter than
I’d been held before

Hands shot out
a geyser of life;
an amniotic fluid hot as bathwater,
and found my face.

The heat rode me easy.

“Cactus woman,” she whispered
and I died
A spine became a tear,
sweet tequila on my cheek

Book Four

A heated glow
burns slow, burns low.
The slumbering weight
of passion
heaves in a swamp of need.

A supine woman sweats,
sprawled on an empty bed.
Hands curl, palms up,
arms spread wide
in gentle supplication

A fever of desire
has captivated her;
a vision of what should be

paralyzes and prevents
that which could be.

Body mountains rise
from an ocean of want.
Cooled by hot zephyrs
yet aching toward heavenly lips,
she is kissed in a gift of love.

And breathing becomes a chore,
thinking impossibility,
as throbbing presence grows
singing in that woman cave:
a drumbeat to hum her aware.

Yet all needs go unmet,
passion lies empty and wet,
and fear stands a jeering victor.
A supine woman sweats,
arms wide in gentle supplication.

Book Five

I know you, Gypsy woman
eyes like goldfish darting
and ebon hair frothing to here.

You've walked these halls before.

Awed -- I touch silver
piercing dark nipple flesh.
I wince; draw in breath
sharp and harsh.
Yet cunt throbs;
think about the pleasure
... the pain.

I want you Gypsy woman
skin the same blue copper

as sky before first starlight.

You've walked these halls before.
Come..... walk toward me now.

Book Six

I woke this morning
and tasted your name,
wondering at the line
that pulls me to you.

Rainbows pose and shimmer
in drops of early dew
but only if the sun smiles
a good morning.

How came you to mean
so much to oak-tree me
when most days I have to try
hard to remember your face?

Bits and pieces ride me though,
easy as colors in winter dew:
gesture of a hand,
tilt of a head,
that hesitant, shy move.

I savor the laugh,
low and rich and sly;
how just hearing it
brings me soft to that
place where nervous hides.

I wish I could watch your face
and have time for delights and pain,
learn the silent speech of your gesture dance,
the nuance of your anger and joy.

Only then can I know you
and salve my doubt,
only then can I need you
without any guilt.

Book Seven

Amazon dusk,
you steal across me like twilight.
Silver clouds of your interest
lap against the back of my neck,
and when I turn, I see
the loveliness of encroaching night.

Your presence enfolds me in dimness,
yet lit by astral rims of sparking light,
each flash courses a path of endearment
through my body, my soul,
and I fully realize the power of God.

Your midnight falls far too swiftly.
Twilight should linger, should last a year.
Hold me, stroke me into moonlight,
I will repay in kind.
Entwined, we can be the power of nature.

Book Eight

IT IS A joy watching you. You are talking low, dark hair swaying, strong hands forming the words your mouth expresses.

I find it hard to look away. I force my gaze down to my plate even as my mind betrays me, fleeing to the previous evening when you held me close while saying good night.

I remember keenly the heat generated; the hard planes of your body. Yet the contact had been fleeting, too brief. And when you turned to go I felt deflated, aching with emptiness; a new mother finished with birth. Wanting to cry out my need, I had remained silent, realizing this new relationship was far too fragile for demands.

When had the relationship changed? The two of us have been friends for years, down and dirty dykes against the world we call ourselves, and I had not expected that friendship to turn into anything more. Yet...yet, hadn't I always wanted you just a little? Hadn't erotic thoughts of you captured my nights, just as powerfully as the real you punctuated my days?

Then, yesterday. I had been making pizza, vegetarian, of course. You worship your body at the altar of metal and mirror at the gym four days a week and insist on proper fuel for the machine. This ongoing insistence is paying off. Your body is near perfection.

Engrossed in pizza sauce, I hadn't paid much attention when you moved close, so close behind only a whisper of air separated us. The heat of you had passed to me then, via lips pressed to that amorous, sensitive spot where neck joins shoulder. Remembering the feel of your lips there still causes my heart to lurch in bittersweet craving.

The kiss surprised both of us.

You apologized, making light of the moment, teasing that I shouldn't wear my hair in a Gibson Girl sweep. Too tempting as it left the neck vulnerable, good thing you weren't a vampire, you said.

"Annie, you're not listening to me," you interrupt my thoughts. You study me, a frown creasing your forehead. "Is something wrong?"

"No," I hurry to say, surreptitiously digging my thumbnail into my palm, effectively jolting myself from reverie. "I'm sorry. Guess I'm tired."

You smile, brown eyes twinkling with familiar light. I lean to press your hand. The electricity of the touch leaves me breathless.

Eyes meet and you pale.

“Annie, what’s happening?”

I look away and sigh. “I don’t know. I don’t know.”

Your fingers caress my hand with maddening perfection, just the way I like it. I pull away, frightened.

“Be with me, live with me,” you say softly.

I search your face for signs of laughter. This has to be some new joke.

“You’re so special to me,” you continue quietly. “I’m comfortable with you in a way I can’t be with other people. I want—no, need—to be with you all the time. I think about you constantly, wondering what you’re doing, what you’re feeling, whether or not you’re thinking about me. You’re my life now and I can’t imagine being without you. I love you, Annie.”

Tears well, making my eyes ache. I send my gaze out over your dear, familiar face, then across your small, cozy apartment. Could I live without you now? After I know you feel the same love? Could I be happy with you as just a friend? I press my eyes shut and ball my fists in my lap. All has changed with just a few short words.

But suppose I moved in and we hate each other within six months. Could I live with that?

“Take your time,” you counsel with a sigh. “Think about it. I’m not going anywhere.”

Keep it light and easy, I tell myself. “I thought you had to work out of town next week,” I remind, smiling through indecision.

Your face registers surprise for a moment, then acceptance.

“Yeah,” you reply with a low laugh, “but you’ll know where I am.”

You lean to one side and, from a nearby shelf, fetch a small box. “I have something for you. I don’t want you to forget me, not for a single moment.”

You slide a small silver band inlaid with turquoise onto the index finger of my left hand. The band settles there comfortably, as if it belongs.

“Wear this for me, Annie. It can mean anything you like, but to me it means our lives are linked and have been for some time.” You fix smoldering eyes on me and breath builds a home in my throat.

You stand abruptly—deliberately breaking the moment—and pad on bare feet across to the stereo, to switch off the music. “It’s late. We’d better call it a night.”

I am numb, staring at the lovely ring. How you know me, how you know my tastes exactly. I can't believe this is happening, but feel a tremor of excitement nevertheless. You love me, woman to woman, and want me in your life.

“Annie?”

I glance up, my mind a million miles away, imagining a life spent with my best friend.

You laugh and comb strong fingers through your dark hair. “Are you ready to go? I'll walk out with you.”

“I'll just stay here again. Is that okay?”

You smile, but fidget nervously. “Sure. Let me get your pillow.”

I cover the leftover salad and slip it into the refrigerator then flick out the kitchen light. I feel strange, detached. Taking my glass of wine, I move to the bedroom and strip off my jeans and sweater. I am leaning over, pulling off extra cushions, when you return. A low moan alerts me to your presence. I turn and stare wide-eyed.

You stand in the bedroom doorway, pillow clasped protectively to your slim body. “Do you have any idea what you are doing to me,” you ask hoarsely.

“Me? What are you talking about?”

Are you angry with me?

“Look at you! You're so goddamned gorgeous and wearing that...”

I look down at my satin camisole and tap pants, perplexed. You have seen me in my underclothes a thousand times. “What's going on?”

You close your eyes and clench your teeth, the movement causing your lean cheeks to flex convulsively.

“Two years, Annie. It's been two years since my last relationship.”

“And?” I ask, exasperation stilling my natural empathy.

“And I've not made love to anyone since. And don't you realize? Everything has changed between us.”

I watch you warily and ponder the truth lurking in the sadness of your eyes. I realize suddenly that when you aren't working you're invariably with me. And I with you.

Slowly, immersed in an abruptly heated ocean of air, I move toward you. I cup a palm on each of your shoulders and press my lips against the warmth of your mouth.

Parting my lips, I seek your tongue and you respond ardently, snatching my form close in sudden aggression. Your lips and tongue plunder me, quickly taking over until I feel myself melting, becoming one with that hot ocean. Passion rises on drifting Sargasso currents and a throbbing begins in the soft warmth of my center. Desire threatens to pull me willingly under.

The kiss breaks and holds, lasting an eternity. I forget who I am, forget where I am, as it transports me up and up into you, into your breath, the warm wetness of your mouth, the gentle agility of your tongue as it laps my mouth into sweet cream.

Losing sanity, I break the kiss and take your hands into mine. I wriggle close, pressing my breasts and the sloping mound of my sex against your pliant form. In one smooth motion, I pull the lace and silk camisole over my head and toss it aside.

Your eyes leave my face and pounce upon my breasts. I remember that you had once teased me about my small breasts so I cup them, one in each hand, and offer them, my mouth pursed into a moue of invitation.

“Oh Goddess,” you breathe. Tension grows rampant in the small room and we remain silent, basking in passion’s frightening intensity.

One of my hands creeps low to invade the waistband of my loose panties, but your voice arrests the movement.

“No, let me, please,” you beg. Dropping to your knees, you slide the satin, with exasperating slowness, along my thighs. Freeing them, you rub their softness between your hands.

“These are wet,” you say, radiating wonder and excitement in equal measure. “You do want me, just a little.”

I smile and spread my hands wide in a gesture of helplessness. “Did you doubt it?”

“I’d hoped...” You wrap your arms about my middle and press your mouth to that tender spot between navel and groin. My head falls back and I gasp at the sudden contact.

You are speaking but so low I have to bend over to hear.

“Annie, Annie, I love you so much. Tell me what to do to make you happy,” you say.

I reach down and pull you to your feet. Seeing the moisture in your eyes, a great surge of tenderness rocks me. I clasp you to my breasts and you kiss them, gently teasing each nipple with your tongue. Reaction courses through me, sending electric jolts from breast to groin. Breathless, I push you away, my fingers fluttering at the waist of your jeans. Eagerly you help and are stripped within seconds.

“Nice, very nice,” I murmur, eyes raking across your slim, powerful body. Laughter blooms and we come together, tongues dancing sensually. On the bed you lay your weight atop me, pressing me deep into the mattress.

You kiss me hungrily, lips soft flesh one moment, nibbling hardness the next. I moan quietly and can't stop; my soul is being snatched away a piece at a time by hot solar winds. Hours pass and when I am weak with ecstasy, you move lower, sucking and nibbling the peaks of my breasts into extraordinary firmness. I cry out from the aching pleasure.

You move again, yet lower, lips trailing across belly; tongue lava from the erupting volcano of our passion. You spread my legs and your fingers caress the swelling hardness there. You inhale deeply, breathing in the essence of me, then press your mouth there, right above that throbbing nest of sensation. I cry out again as tremors of pleasure shake me. I still, not wanting to frighten the feeling away. The feeling mounts, growing and pulsing with each swath of your tongue. You probe the wet sheath below with a slow, deliberate finger and I erupt from my body in a flurry of orange angel wings. You groan in empathy and press your cheek against my thigh.

Moments later I hold out my arms for you and you move into them, our bodies sliding together like syrup onto hot toast, sweet and fast.

“Wait, don't move,” you whisper in my ear. “Feel it, feel it.”

I feel it and not just on the surface of my skin. Something breaks away down deep and I know it is the foolish resistance my mind once harbored. You are my one true love.

We lay a long time, lips barely touching, bodies pressed together in an overload of sensation, the firmness of breast and pubis magnifying, clarifying the rightness of our time together.

I steal one hand down along your body, my tongue still sampling the pleasure of your mouth. The hand finds a home, a niche that fits and you begin to move gently, secretly.

Soon it dawns on me that if you continue to move exactly as you are moving, the world is going to explode into warm colors that will drip onto both of us and change us somehow.

You whimper, trying to convey the wonderful itch I am arousing and I whimper understanding back into your mouth. Your hands reach convulsively to knead my back. Then the orgasm is upon you and I feel and see nothing except the heat of the explosion as it ravages us again and again, your sex constricting and expanding as it creates a new universe, stars from black holes and warmth from the crisping heat of passion.

I move my hand against the warm puppy of your sex again and again until you cry for mercy then lower yourself closer, cupping my face in fragrant hands and kissing me.

Sometime during the night we awaken and come together again in spontaneous hunger, each grateful to find the other still there. In the morning when I awaken, in bed alone, panic swamps me. Then I smell coffee, realize that you are nearby, and relax.

You are waiting with a breakfast tray and a smile when I come from the bathroom a few minutes later. I return the smile ruefully, embarrassed under your calm scrutiny.

“Good morning,” you say finally, eyes seeking reassurance about so many things.

My gaze, when I lift it at last, is calm and steady, untroubled. Relief shows in your face.

“There’s juice and toast and coffee here,” you babble as you place the tray on the nightstand. “We can get something more substantial later if you like.”

“No, this is fine, Thank you for fixing it.” My eyes study you.

You laugh. “I’m pretty inept in the kitchen, but I do try.”

I lean forward to plant a chaste kiss on your cheek. “I think you do great. In every room,” I whisper.

You blush and take a huge gulp of juice.

“Corbie?” I say a few minutes later, my fingers idly twisting the new ring.

“Hmmm?”

“Yes.”

“Yes?” You choke on your toast.

I smile sweetly. “Yes.”

Book Nine

The sense of you leaps
into the soul of me,
speeds like quicksilver,
under and through my skin.

Your aura of radiance
brushes against mine with

a sensual push and pull.
I feel the heat of you.

Moving into the spell
of our magic working,
we sing, sing and celebrate,
the charisma of our passion

Book Ten

Images trouble Sara.
Hot moist lips pressed
to her curving neck.

Heavy wet thighs
snuggled horizontally
alongside her own.

Reality troubles Sara.
Cold bedrooms
sterile, void of life...and love.

The awesome chores of day
and the careful milk wiped
from tiny, expressive faces
are no match for the promise
found in rapturous, writhing sleekness
and whispered confidences in the night

Book Eleven

Upon the gentle waft of spring,

possibilities arrive.

Indigo flower opens,
as verdant comes the world.

Skin with sun smell lingering,
and eyes that lead to a new place.

Friendly doors open
before the beckon sounds.

Book Twelve

SHE WAS SWIMMING toward me across a small enclosed pool of ocean with smooth, powerful strokes, her short, dark hair turned silver by the water. As I watched, hidden by trees, she stepped into the shallows below the deck and rose up, strong hands sluicing sheets of water from her suit-clad body. I stood amazed by the richness of her breasts—melon globes of softly muscled flesh. They swelled from a hard beefy chest, topped by firm nipples centered in the bodice of crimson. Her shoulders were broad and subtly curved with substance and her wide belly lay flat and smooth. Her legs rose like columns of sculpted granite meeting with curious grace to cup the darkness at the mound of Venus.

Scratching idly at her right thigh, she turned and dove into the deeper water, arms cupping and pulling her through the salt water pool with dynamic speed.

I was too shaken by the sight of her to complete my passage. I had to turn away and melt into the forest. Slowly following the line of trees along the beach, I made my way home.

Once inside the cottage, I mechanically fixed hot tea. Only when the cup was in front of me on the kitchen table did I allow my mind to focus on what I had seen and, more importantly, on what I had felt.

I desired her in a big way. Watching her unconscious casualness had affected me in a strange fashion. I'd seen my share of undressed females in my life—males too, for that matter. So why should the sight of this woman affect me so? I reviewed my feelings. How much of this was due to what I had learned last evening. Was I enamored of her because now I knew she might be like me?

Most puzzling was the way my body had reacted. I reached one hand down and pressed it over the mound of my sex, able to gauge wetness even through the fabric of shorts and panties. A gentle throbbing still disturbed me there. I brought the hands up and swept them across my breasts. The tips, awake and alert, leapt to new life beneath my palms.

I drew my hands away and shuddered. I wanted her. The feeling rushed across me. I imagined I felt her sleekness pressed against me, wet skin sliding sleekly over taut skin. I ached to cup the heady fullness of her breasts in my hands, wanted to pluck the ripe red raspberry nipples from her breasts with my lips. I wanted to plunder the fur and crevice of her sex with my fingers and tongue. I wanted these things with an ache that was consuming my entire body.

With a growl of frustration I left the table, tea untouched. I crept to my bed as if suffering a dire illness and crawled beneath the blankets, assuming a fetal curl, both hands pressed to my groin. There I stayed, falling asleep, my mind trying to understand the awful, puzzling ache consuming me.

Several hours later I woke, my eyes wet with tears, the roar of the ocean surrounding me. The cottage felt hot so I kicked the coverlet aside. My thoughts flew to her as I came fully awake. How could I be so enamored of a woman who hated me? I knew then my subconscious tears were for the futility of my situation. I told myself that she would be no different from the rest of the women I'd shared myself with, probably more difficult as the barriers to touching her soul loomed even larger.

Yet, there was something there, some unspoken something between us. It had begun hammering at me a little every day. I could recognize it now and it scared me. I didn't feel equipped to deal with the growing feelings I was developing for her and certainly didn't feel I could handle forcing them to go away. I rose and strode into the night through the front door. I watched the ocean for a time then walked around back to lean one hip against the railing and watch the full moon as she lolled across the treetops. The moon glow made the night into the murky crispness of unexposed film; certain surfaces were raised in bas-relief while others retreated into light and shadow. I wrapped my arms about myself in a comforting hug. I did so want someone in my life, but I'd rather be alone than with a prickly pear woman who was incapable of tenderness. It was at times like this however, after I'd seen her beauty, that I realized how lonely I'd allowed my life to become. Was I doing this on purpose? Was I the one afraid of finding that tenderness? I thought of the women I'd loved, listing them on one hand. I thought of why the relationships had foundered and realized it was not always my fault. They just lost steam, weren't meant to be. Though doubts lingered, I still believed that there was someone out there for me. Someone who could touch me in places I'd never been touched. The question was, would I allow her in when the time came?

Liquid syllables shyly step forth from moisture-blessed lips, riding astride the mist of ale-dampened breath.

Words flow across to me, melting over my being; a honeycomb-laden nectar heated by August sun.

Though embarrassed, unsure, yet phrases push forth; the sweet warble of an ancient tongue rouses the angels to song.

The words you speak fall in numbered cadence. The number two calls: side by side, holy place.

For there's no greater church than the subtle shift of consciousness; of desire moving beneath the skin and full moon swell of loving eyes.

Book Thirteen

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from moisture-blessed lips,
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shift of consciousness;
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Book Fourteen

Chocolate legs
I was watching.
How you postured,
how you posed,
knowing I was watching.

Flirting.
Beneath your skirt
(a conservative choice, my lord),
chocolate legs beckoned sweetly,
the confection heat treated
into a full sheen of satin.

Tongue licks lips.

Knowing I can't follow,
certain I got that paycheck to earn,
you swish that skirt,
and toss that hair.
Out the door you go.
A vixen smile the only reward
for my voracious adoration.

Book Fifteen

Next aisle over,
I saw you and I lusted,
hungering to know you.

You made me recall rivers
and the sleek, muscled life there.

Your skin made me covet;
satin - unblemished – dark;
as you spoke to others,
a tone deep as mulled wine.

I could take your fine features
and crinkle them with laughter.
I could take your coltish body
and lift it to quaking delight.

Yet we shall remain strangers.
You ambiguous, a shadow
and myself too lamed in emotion
to ever chance at love again.

Book Sixteen

I look at your name written there,
strong, decisive, proud

the park ranger

and I ask if you shall be the one.
Searching, searching,
I weary of the chase
Is true love out there
and does she wear your face?

Look at me.
Raise your eyes so I can see.

Will you be the one?
The one who needs to love me?

Book Seventeen

WHEN WE PASSED on the crowded sidewalk, I felt a lurch of desire, here, down low, and had no choice but turn and follow you.

I studied your square, cropped hair as it played against your long neck, step, sway, step, sway, and wondered how you kept from laughing: surely the dark caress tickled.

From behind, I savored the angularity of your form: spare, broad shoulders tapering down to slim waist and gently protruding roundness. Watching the subtle dance of your smooth ass, I imagined I could feel each twitch beneath my hands.

Wetness blossomed.

My gaze consumed your small, rich breasts when you turned onto Commerce Street. Breath caught in my throat as curve of fullness and jutting nipple protruded in the torrent of wind scouring this street. My lips ached for the taste of your eyelids as you closed them momentarily against blowing grit.

You walked faster, the sharp crunch of your flat sandals carrying to me over the background sounds of cars and pedestrian noise. I kept pace, hanging far back so you wouldn't sense my presence and bolt like an unriden mare.

Businesses zipped by: a garlic-billowing Italian restaurant, black and oily garage for car repair, small, quiet flower shop with its antiseptic smell of forced blooms. Farther on we passed a grocery with fresh produce stacked on low tables outside. Sweeping past a table of melons, their sweetness rose, breathed into me, and I imagined myself between the heft of this leg and that, choking on your nectar.

I pressed my lips together hard.

We moved on for blocks, my eyes never leaving you, only peripherally aware of the life revolving around us. I fantasized about what you could mean to me and practiced the words I would say to you when I summoned courage to beg you to stop and see me.

Wind beckoned and air freshened. I felt the first raindrop, fine as dandelion fluff, and it saddened me. I knew rain would take you inside and away from me, the preservation of your jeans and blouse more important than my unknown worship.

But you continued on and the small spate of droplets faded to mist.

I realized, finally, where our path led—to the waterfront—and wondered what your life was, that you came to this dirty, forgotten place. Where did you live? Where did you work?

A damp sheet of newspaper blew up and fastened greedily to my thigh as I trod along the busy, noisy dock. Part of me pretended it was your mouth and hot palm pressed.

Then you stopped at the metal railing at land's end and the ocean waved a cheery hello. Wind from the bay caressed your cheeks and forehead.

And I accused nature of trespass. Interloper!

Creeping back among piles of burlap and impossible coils of thick rope, I continued to drink from your presence, heart thudding in sudden what ifs. I wanted to be there with you, our lean bodies entwined as our hips curved against the railing now cradled by your soft belly. I frowned as I imagined the on-lookers' reaction to two women embracing. Would there be catcalls? Violence? One never knew.

But I saw us there, your thin model swan grace pushed against my pumped muscles. My jagged, pierced lips pressed to your neck, just so, your sleek, blunt hair separating and engulfing. My hands, hard and callused, would be braided with your strong, sinewy fingers as they danced a tattoo of need, of wanting.

Blinking to clear my vision, I realized you had moved away and fear crowded my chest. Leaping recklessly onto the dock, I peered to and fro until I spotted you entering Fenton Street. Don't go there, I cried inwardly, racing past the curious and the uncaring. Fenton Street was deserted, a place of possible danger, a harsh interruption to daily life. I turned and you turned.

A shadowed alley swallowed you, and I stopped long enough to envy. Then it swallowed me as well.

You are there; laughing mouth, hot, hot skin. Taking and giving so much, so suddenly, I swoon.

You catch me with heated lips and a zipper sounds loud in my ears. I feel your hands against my belly, my breasts, and a pleasant darkness nibbles at my mind. Your tongue tastes every corner of my mouth, playful, loving. I find secret wetness as you guide my hand. Pulling back to

give you my strength, our gazes lock in wordless wanting; shame and triumph, grim abandon. Our rhythm rivals high tide until you, deflated by a small wail, fall against concrete and brick. I fall with you, my body feeling fire. Breath rasps against high, autographed walls.

And you move away, too fast. A final loving kiss, muttered phrases about being late, calling later, and you are gone.

Fingering the sharp edges of your card, I felt the tug of emptiness where you'd stood. My body ached for completion; my body ached for you, for the promises you'd whispered.

A toothless drifter mumbled and raised his wrinkled brown-paper lump of beverage, a toast to the vagary of love and life. He'd been a voyeur, hidden in the poor light of the cluttered alley.

I grinned and thumbed-up an embarrassed gratitude, but I remained stunned, buffeted by the whirlwind of you.

In the short time it took me to make my way home, I had memorized it all; your name, your number, and especially, the wild, unexpected taste of you.

Book Eighteen

On Ides of March doubled—
when lifting a hand gay-ly
to pluck ripe fruit from a silent tree,
one pauses with indecision.

The fragile shell covering
that orb of pulpy flesh
could hide secrets.
Unripe bitterness?
Or sweet candy flowing slow like honey?

But then consider:
how a foot fondled in easy camaraderie
lifts the spirit soaring;
how a hesitant kiss of exploration
sends the heart thudding;
how a gentle caress to the neck

all but takes the breath away
and how silent holding, intimacy,
stops time and makes the world unspin.
Perhaps fruit should always depend,
a firm globe of unexpected mystery.
And the addictive, heady nectar
be savored in small, safe doses;
gift drops of dew from a silent tree

Book Nineteen

Older lady lives alone
in rooms so neat, so precise,
but fragrant with mothballs
and with age.

Older lady, lips so dry;
never moistened by the steaming
of passion running high.

Withered, crab-apple breasts
never held in easy, satiated slumber.

Would the precision
of lace-ruffled rooms
be a pretense,
easily abandoned without thought
for the press of soft, hot woman flesh?
Or perhaps the quiet of order,
the safety of routine
is employed as a protection
against the press of soft, hot woman flesh

Book Twenty

I WOKE WITH the scent of Jacie's sun-washed blondness plumping my nostrils. Eagerly I pushed into wakefulness, arms already forming into the mold that always cradled Jacie's small body close. Yet even as my eyes opened, before my eyes opened, I knew the arms would remain empty.

I fastened my gaze on the white lace curtains swaying in spring breeze. Early morning life moved just outside the window but I didn't care. I felt the gnawing blow as my heart withered and cooled anew.

Terry moved closer, her warmth preceding her form, and pulled me into a spoon-fashion embrace. My body stiffened. Sensing resistance, Terry raised a tousled head and peered sleepily. How well she knew me; we'd been together ten years.

"Honey, relax. It'll be okay, baby."

A tear escaped the closet of my eye and crept along the slope of one cheek. "I know hon."

I pulled away from Terry's easy warmth and strode to the window. Sunlight frolicked in the garden I had once tended so lovingly. Neglected these past six months, it still bore a type of surreal beauty, translucent green in the soft morning light. Songbirds raced each other for the best perches among the willow branches and overblown herbs chuckled to one another with each passage of sultry wind.

I slowly closed the window as a knock sounded on the door downstairs.

"You'll have another child," the nurse ordered as she patted my shoulder with professional comfort. Terry stood silently by, her form ponderous with negation. Grief bowed her slender body.

As if another child could replace our Jacie. No other child could possess dimples placed at precisely the right angle to turn his face into a graphic of laughter. No other child could have his heavy, compact body, perfect for cuddling with either mother or playing T-ball with the neighbor children. Another child would be foreign to me, no brother or sister to my beloved Jacie, but rather an interloper. How odd to think of feeding some stranger at my breast.

THE OLD WOMAN pushed her way into the kitchen in a forceful manner that brooked no protest. She towed a small toddler by one hand, the tanned darkness of her claw-like fingers

swallowing the pudgy white innocence of the baby's grasp. I stepped back quickly to avoid being trampled as they made their way inside. We regarded one another for some time.

"Hear you lost a baby," the old woman said finally, her eyes ancient, wearied. The thin gauntness of her face made me ache somewhere deep inside.

"Who told..." I stammered, wondering if I was still asleep and dreaming this encounter.

"Doan matter who, what matters is the way it is now. You lose a baby? Your baby die?"

Tears welled in my eyes but I'd be damned if I'd let this crazy old woman see me cry.

"Yes, we lost our little boy. A car hit him. Now, if you don't mind...it's early..." I moved toward the door hoping the woman would take the hint. I was dismayed to find her attention elsewhere; wrapped in her own personal gloom, the woman was staring down toward the floor.

"Hmmp, cars. Doan they beat all?" she muttered, shaking her head at the floor. "Same's what took my Andrea and my granddaughter, Judy. Drunk driver it was. Andrea's man, Charles, lasted four days, but he went too. Said he was bleedin' inside or some such. I doan take to them cars myself, since the accident an' all. I walk when I can." She peered up at me.

I tugged at the collar of my robe, fingers worrying the thick chenille pile. I remembered suddenly where I'd seen the familiar old woman—trudging along the side of Highway 29 heading into town. I had passed her many times during the past few weeks.

"I...I'm sorry," I said finally. "For your loss."

The words were empty, useless, and I knew it, but lacked a better response. Abruptly turning away, I put the kettle on for tea.

"Last month it was," the woman continued as she smoothed steel gray hair back from her face. The toddler, freed from the older woman's grasp, waddled to the nearest cabinet and began opening and closing it with rampant glee.

Alarmed by the noise, afraid Terry would be awakened, I moved to the child and in a habitual gesture I'd thought long gone, snatched the child to my hip and continued rummaging through the cupboard searching for tea bags.

The old woman, looking on, smiled, large teeth yellow in the slanting morning sunlight. "I thought you was goin' to shake her for a minute there."

I eyed the woman in bewilderment, then turned my gaze upon the child. Quickly I placed her on the floor and wiped my hands against the sides of my robe. The abandoned two-year-old tugged anxiously at a tawny curl as she pondered her next move. Crying seemed a good idea so she let out one short, plaintive wail.

“It was six months ago,” I whispered, eyes on the child, yet far away. “It was a young boy, a teenager, out joyriding with his friends. They said they didn’t even see him.”

The old woman nodded, teeth working her bottom lip. “Drunk driver, on his way home from a bar. Went right through a red light, seventy miles an hour. Charlie never had a chance to swerve.”

She indicated the toddler who was now pulling herself up using my leg and the hem of my robe. “This one, Gina, was in the back seat in one of them baby contraptions. She made it all right.”

I looked at Gina, really looked, and pain hit me so hard I had trouble breathing. Looking away, I lifted one hand to my mouth.

Silence cloaked the room in a mantle of grief as we pondered our losses.

“Why are you here?” I asked, eyes coming to life. “Why are you here, stirring up old pain and memories best left forgotten? I want you to leave.”

The old woman sighed and took a seat at the small table.

Gina, spying her grandmother at eye level, squealed happily and raced across the floor to lay her reddish head upon the old woman’s knees. The woman, a tender smile lighting her face, caressed the small girl’s back with one thin, gnarled hand.

“Goin’ soon enough,” she said softly. “That’s why I’m here. Got cancer an it’s gotten bad now. Pains me somethin’ fierce. Doctor says I gotta go inta the hospital. Probably be there until I pass on myself.”

I felt pity but a sudden epiphany shook it from me.

“Oh, now wait a minute. You’re not thinking of leaving that baby with me, are you? I’ll tell you right now, there’s no way. I don’t want any more children.” I choked back a sob. “Not after Jacie, no way.”

“We ain’t got nobody,” the woman told me, chin held high. “That was the last of my family what got killed. My Ernie died ten years ago and I ain’t got no brothers or sisters. See here, I got the papers all drawn up for you an’ ever’tin. Done by yore own lawyer, matter of fact. He’s the one who tol’ me. All legal, all you gotta do is sign.” She laid a sheaf of bent paper on the table.

“Look,” I protested as I rescued the shrieking tea kettle. “I’m sorry about your trouble, I swear I am, but I have my own trouble to deal with. I’m sure you’ll find a good home for the baby, but I’m sorry, it just can’t be me. I don’t even think I know how to be a mother. What kind of mother lets her three-year-old get near the street?” Bitterness twisted my features.

The old woman studied me for several moments. “Mothers ain’t born,” she said. “Mothers grow. You’d be fine.”

“Damn it, no!” I shouted, shoving my full cup, hot tea and all, into the sink. “Just leave me be, would you please?”

The old woman eyed me a long moment. “You know, before I heard about you, Gina was on her way to a foster home, mayhap with people who don’t love kids an’ only in it for the state money. Is that what you want? Look at her an tell me it is.”

“Yes. No. I don’t care,” I stammered. “I just want you out of my house.”

The woman stood and hitched up her baggy knit trousers. Taking the little girl by the hand, she made her way to the kitchen door. “We’ll be on then. I’ll leave them papers. Just in case.”

“I really am sorry,” I said.

The woman turned, opened the door, and smiled at me. She shrugged. “It’s all right. We unnerstand if it hurts too much.” Addressing the toddler, she continued, “Don’t we, Gina. Tell the nice lady bye bye.”

Gina turned and looked at me with weighing eyes. Silently she let go her grandmother’s hand and walked across the narrow expanse of floor. Reaching my side, she laid one small palm upon my thigh, pressed hard once, then patted once. Bringing up her other hand she opened her balled fist and offered me a large white jellybean. Some of the white coating had melted onto the toddler’s palm, but I reached into the sticky mess as if mesmerized.

Smiling, glad that her gift had been well-received, the tiny girl moved back to her grandmother and they walked off into the spring day.

Watching them disappear into the glare of sunlight, I slowly raised the jelly bean to my lips. Tilting back my head, I allowed the egg shape to tip end over end into the cavern of my mouth. I played the orb back and forth a few moments with the heavy muscle of my tongue then finally bit into the candy. My mouth filled with a nectar of such sweetness it made my smile—then laugh aloud.

I moved with exquisite slowness across to the table and pressed the bent papers more firmly onto the surface as if to straighten them with force of will. Looking toward the interior of the house I thought of Terry, even as my hand reached for the pen left abandoned after yesterday’s bill-paying. Moments later, cradling the sheaf of papers in my arms and the pen in one hand, I walked through the quiet house toward my sleeping partner.

Book Twenty-One

I remember slaps like that –
painful affection directed
at that scary place huddling
embarrassed between my legs.

Childhood. Grown up fast.
Sprouted from cabbage leaves,
forced four square into pleasing MAN.

Taken from clouds,
dragons, elves, gypsies.
Brought into smells,
shadows, hurts....
Things no cabbage girl should know.

I remember slaps like that.
And when hand approaches,
I shy, I bolt,
sure no tender touch
was meant for cabbage leaves

Book Twenty-Two

Wariness confounds me,
as I grope and try to grasp
that elusive love escaping
even before it's captured.

How will I know you want me
if your eyes stay turned away?
How will you see my craving
if my head is downcast?

Honesty stumbles across my tongue.
There's so much I need you to know.
Your richness cries out to me
and enfolding becomes necessity.

But hands spread high in defense,
I back away again...again.
And deep within a death begins
for daring to covet a yolk of life

Book Twenty-Three

THE CLOCK BEATS with mournful regularity. It's eleven p.m., time for me to close, but I'm reluctant.

I lift my eyes from the boredom of logging books and study you, a lone figure in the cathedral-ceilinged library. Today you wear abused denim on legs and back. The white cotton shirt you wear beneath the short bomber-style jacket fits tight, cupping perfect breasts. Believe me, I noticed every curve of you as soon as you entered the building.

Though you probably don't realize it, your daily visits are the only thing that's kept me in this job the past few months. Promised a raise a year ago, I have yet to see it. So, you're the little perk I take. Watching you, dreaming about you, is what I allow. I don't have enough courage to do anything else, though often I'm hard-pressed to keep my hands to myself.

I think about the day, that hot day this past summer, when you wore those shorts, and that sleeveless shirt with huge arm openings. That was a tough, but lovely, day for me. Every time you moved I got another look at the white, untanned sides of your breasts, the bronzed length of your legs.

I still get hot every time I think about it. I lower my eyes, afraid of what my face might say if you happen to look my way.

You move then and out of the corner of my eye I see you rise and stretch. Is that... I jerk my head to look at you straight on. Through the gap in your jacket created by the power of your stretch I see your breasts clearly, nipples hard as rocks and pushing at the fabric. I swear to God,

I can feel them against my own chest and my breathing stops for just a minute. Then your arms lower and you smother a yawn as you move into the stacks.

It's always fiction with you and I can't figure it out.

Mary says you're a writer. So, makes sense that you'd be doing research. In nonfiction though. I can't figure out the deal with the fiction. Sometimes you take thirty books down in one night. What are you looking for? Are you copying other writers?

Tired of thinking so hard, I leave the checkout desk and move to turn the latch on the door so no one else will come in. Not that many would this time of night, still I've got to follow the rules. Mary'll have my ass if I don't.

And then I feel you behind me. Whirling, I move too fast and startle you. The books you're holding slide apart and try to fly like inexperienced birds. I swoop to catch them, an eerie silence swelling as rescuing the books becomes the moment, my whole being focused on the task.

A chuckle emerges from you and I glance into blue eyes, tired yet lit with merriment at my plight. Your hands are twisted abnormally for they have writhed almost backward in an effort to prevent more of the impatient birds escaping. Awkwardly, holding my own escapees within my arms, I reach and try to help right yours. Gingerly we place them on the checkout desk and watch placidly to make sure no others try to fly.

"I thought they were goners," you say finally.

I turn and look at you, wondering suddenly what you will think of me. Do I look okay to you? Do I smell okay after eight hours work? Am I too radical a dyke for you with my cropped hair and piercings? Preoccupied, I nevertheless mutter polite chitchat as I maneuver behind the desk. With a shaking finger I awaken the computer screen only to find out the server at the main branch has gone down for the night. Shit. I stare at your stack of books wondering what to do and say.

"What's the matter," you ask, concern creating a deep-seated crease in your brow. "I don't, like, owe any fines or anything, do I?"

"No," I stammer. Ah, the beast you stir within me. "The main terminal has gone down is all."

"So...I can't get the books?"

I look at you, feeling fondness. No disappointment should ever cross your path. "Well, let's see. You've got eight books here, why don't I just go ahead and write down the names and DD numbers and then the scan numbers and I can enter them in manually tomorrow when I come in."

A lopsided smile charms me to my toes. "You can do that? You'll let me take them tonight?"

I lay one of my own killer grins on you, feeling brave suddenly. “Anything for you, darlin’.”

Silently, we regard one another until I let uncertainty swamp me and lower my eyes in defeat. I busy myself gathering paper and pencil, switching off the terminal, anything to avoid your rejection. Then your hand touches mine as you reach for the first book. Intentional? I’m not sure.

“Here, let me call them out to you. It might be faster that way.” You eye me questioningly then read aloud the first title, the first author, then the numbers gracing the spine and back.

My hands fumble from your nearness and I feel so incredibly stupid. How could you ever be interested in a numbskull like me? We go down the list and my depression swells. Am I to go through the rest of my life attracted to women I’m afraid to approach?

You call out the last book and sigh with a sense of completion. I fold the paper and stuff it carefully into the front pocket of my jeans. “I’ll keep this with me so no one else will fool with it until I can get it into the computer tomorrow afternoon,” I explain.

Lifting your books, you cradle them in your arms and move toward the door. I react quickly, leaping ahead to unlock the latch so you can pass through the portal. I open the door and hold it wide, but you pause in the doorway to regard me with candid, calm eyes.

“Tell me your name,” you order gently.

My face is inches from yours so I whisper a response.

“Casey, my name is Casey.”

“Casey. You need to relax, Casey.”

The earth stops spinning and my thoughts vanish as you lean and press soft, watermelon-scented lips to mine. The heat of you travels over and I feel the sensation coursing downward forming pools of shimmering mercury. All my defenses are melted away and I am opening to you, passing my own heat back. The kiss ignites and you pull away, eyes soft and clouded. Panting softly we study one another, fleeting thoughts of a hopeful future infusing.

“Thank you, Casey,” you whisper as your palm gentles my cheek. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

I watch you stride along the sidewalk away from me and every particle of my being calls out to you. Yet I understand patience, because in a library things often move slowly...and quietly.

I begin to whistle softly as I switch off lights and check locks. Tomorrow.

Book Twenty-Four

Your gaze spoke to me,
reached and shook me
from across the room.
I knew it was you.

And when we came together,
the earth spoke deep.
It was the eyes held hard and fast,
yearning, burning silent voice.

I was there and you were there,
same place same time.
Arms wrapped, pulled close.
Kisses rampant and scorching.
And the beer spilled on the floor

Book Twenty-Five

I step carefully when I see you,
fearing encroachment, hating to offend.

Yet my mind races forward—
imaging the erotic revealed
in the taste of your skin.

I watch your eyes then pull mine away,
knowing the passion revealed
should you look too closely.

And if my hands should wander too near,
the caress would root and grow an eternity.

Below your breast and above your waist

lies tender territory revealed
for me to explore in dream.
Your lips draw me
moist...and soft...
luscious licks carried on hot, dampened breath.
I step carefully,
avoiding possibility
though all of me is revealed
in the wanting of you

Book Twenty-Six

Just being with you primes the pump.
Though we sit quiet,
our gazes turn and thrust.

When I rise, I realize
the swamp that has pooled.
The heavy dew startles;
I'm always surprised.

Later when I change,
I see the patch of evidence
of how I feel for you;
the wet circle of my desire.

Touching it in wonder,
I inhale the warm bread scent
and dream of the day
I pull wet panties from you.

Psalms

We Love...

Psalm One

Quite often
now that I'm with you
vibrancy threatens
to overtake me

I feel a sort of hum
electric in nature
quivering in that home
deep at my core

Trying to distract myself
quiets the hum for a while
but a single thought of you
your name on a breath or two
sends the quivering higher.

Released there is a meltdown
fuses retreat away
and the spinning copper
drum
slows to a cool roll
awaiting the second
touch of your hand.

Psalm Two

Honey nectar
flowing fast
heated

by sly eyes
blazing night's fire

Desert winds
fail to parch
a well unending
and sweet—
sweet with Queen

Hot passion scalds

Eagerly she searches;
Sapphic student seeking
archaeology's truth
A small cave—Wisdom
to explain the heat
A truth to satisfy
all that seeker seeks

Honey nectar
shows the way
guides with the heat
of a hundred fires

And when the fiery
source reveals,
truth is wrapped amid
heaving thighs of love

Sapphic student
steps through a veil
and finds solace in
good passion's wail
and sees the truth
of ancient wisdom
all heat is found
in a woman's Queendom

Psalm Three

I saw the sweep
of your hair in a silhouette
The waterfall slid forward
as you leaned to lift
your clothing from the floor

Then you came close
to say a goodbye
safe now in cozy sweater
and impenetrable wall
of blue denim

And though it was over
for today, though
our love had been spent
your breasts grew hard
beneath the sweater
as I touched your leg
In the warmth of this room
I knew it wasn't coolness
to blame for the change
Memory of the hour past
brought breast tongues lapping
and my mouth ached to
suck one tongue inside again

My hand crept along
to caress the heavy fruit
thick tips seeking lips
while hidden in the lair
of sweater's warmth

one more time, I said
you're not done, I said
You looked at me and smiled
swept golden hair from your brow
and with Mona Lisa eyes
you lifted the sweater
and said now, do me now.

Psalm Four

There's something about
woman love....
A tenderness
The quality so dearly missed
in most other couplings

An honesty
about love and pain.
Games pale
as Yin swells

Endearments whispered,
caresses conveyed,
thrice as powerful,
means hot sun on the face
is often the only Yang required

Psalm Five

THE WARMTH OF Mother Sun rushes forward and captures me in a spell. I lean back in welcome, willing the tongues of heat and white light to bathe the core of my being in this celestial goodness.

The leaves and moss below my bare body drink the heat like aged red wine and I feel it within, then spiraling upward, carrying a special message—a request—from me to the Mother.

I spy you then, standing confused amid the trees. The whiteness of your ivory skin signals me, a beacon of angelic light. I rise and follow as you explore new surroundings.

As we move through the forest, the scorch of the sun lingers, grows, sizzling in my secret places. And the continuous sight of you sends my thoughts howling. My hands ache to caress you.

Suddenly turning, you surprise me; your hungry shadow self. Laughter lights your face for you sensed I was behind all along.

You welcome the red aura of my passion and we sigh.

Enfolding me in the softness of your melon-scented skin, you saturate me with angel energy. Lips meet and blend into delicious ecstasy as the sunfire rages unchecked. Time and place cease to exist as we are consumed, transformed.

Blissfully burning, unable to disengage, we billow into smoke and ride the sunfire chariot into our home of sun and sky.

Psalm Six

The teasing glances you convey
the whispered words you make me say
turn me molten

Languishing in liquid gold
I feel rising passion's fist
A gentle nudge and
cascade kidnaps reason

Two minds diverge -
carried aloft the cataract:
Passion's folly
Passion's fire

A cynical woman watches

Yet there is this molten gold
sweet sap of excited skin
and caverns yet to be explored
on underground rivers of gold

Psalm Seven

With reluctance
you kiss me
With trepidation
you touch me
With fear
you enter me
With doubt
you handle fire
With doubt
you become fire
With fear
you invite me in
With trepidation
you guide my touch
With reluctance
you kiss me
again and again

Psalm Eight

When you say -
here, kiss it -
I swoon
Yet I bend my all
to the task

When desire fire
kindles your eyes,
I burn
And I move to light
the bonfire

Fortune smiled

and you were there
all and more
than I hoped you'd be

My knees turn
to water
when you move
to me

Ah yes.....
Move to me.

Psalm Nine

THE KISS LASTED a lingering eternity and I found myself transported away. Her sinuous lips and tongue nibbled at mine possessing, releasing, possessing, releasing, in a sensual ebb and flow.

My body began to ache, my limbs growing heavy and sluggish as they swelled with the blood of desire.

The lips moved away, her breath moist and fragrant across my skin. Her mouth traveled a languorous sampling course as she tasted my cheeks, my throat, my ear—knowing just the right feather touch whisper I needed there.

My lips were hers again and the sudden possession caused a deep throbbing in my center. I felt moisture swell and my thighs dampened.

“What’s happening?” I asked in a murmur against her lips.

“What’s wrong, baby?” She searched my face with her soft, loving gaze.

“I feel... I ... here.” I let one hand slide numbly across my lower belly.

“You feel what? Desire? Need? Do you want me?”

“Oh yes, all of that,” I answered softly.

“Then have me, baby. Don’t be afraid. I’m yours.”

Our eyes met in the dimness, then lowered, and I returned her insistent kisses. Prompted by the fire in my body, I slid my hands along her solid waist and found her breasts. Allowed at last to heft their marvelous weight and softness, I felt delirious. Gently moving her backward, I pressed my lips to one, amazed by the fluid firmness—a true delight. Savoring one berry nipple, I pulled it into my mouth, hearing her gasp. Oh, the delicious power. I released the bud and moved to the other, capturing it as well. Low moans began to sound.

Gingerly unsure what to do in my quest to love this woman, I slid my hand down along her belly, encountering thick fur, then penetrating a mustachioed mouth, toothless, but lined with large wet tongues on either side.

She opened her thighs to accommodate me and I moved to one side so I could sink my fingers deep into that marvelous wetness. A delicious aroma floated to me, so like my own but spicier, new and exciting. I withdrew my fingers, their wet warmth cooled by the air outside and I moved them along the lips of that mouth searching for the same pleasure center I enjoyed.

She was lying back, her eyes closed, her breathing shallow, as she experienced my exploration. When my fingers found the clit however, she gasped and her eyes opened. I saw the swirling passion in her face, her gaze, and I smiled.

I leaned to suckle one breast, my fingers circling around that most sensitive sex organ, every now and again dipping into her foamy crevice for more sweet juice. Patiently, gently I loved her body doing all the things which I needed for the fullest expression of my own sexuality.

And some time later it happened. Her breathing quickened, then slowed as her hips moved with flowing, liquid gyrations. She stopped breathing as tremors rumbled from deep within her body. I felt it with my hand but didn’t stop the regular circling of my fingers. Then it was done and my fingers sought her warm sheath, the muscular tongues speaking in throbbing mime deep within. I let them speak to me for the longest time.

She kissed me once, slow and easy, her eyes seeking mine. There was happiness there, contentment.

“Thank you,” she whispered and I felt something swell between us, something so touching I wanted to cry. This is what I had been searching for. This was the tenderness and love I needed to make me complete.

We moved our bodies closer, her lips stealing tears from my cheeks and eyes.

“I love you, I love you,” she whispered. “I fought it for so long—I can’t anymore. Please love me, baby. I’ll die if you don’t.”

I smiled through my tears.

She kissed me and again I felt the world creep away on slow, silent feet. Each caress of her lips lathered my body to my toes and these toes curled in anticipation. With frantic haste fueled by lust, her lips moved lower and I felt her suckle at one breast. I felt momentarily regretful, sorry they were so small. My nipples were large though and achingly erect, craving eagerly. Her lips latched onto one then the other back and forth until my entire body felt like heated sugar-water, the fluids flowing between my legs thick and sticky.

I craved...something...and her hands were there filling me completely and eliciting moans from a well deep inside me. I had never felt anything like this before—this aching need. The sensation of her hands in and on me and her mouth drawing on my breasts, drawing, drawing away and giving back hardness into the liquid sheath of my sex. Her thumb moved and found the button which rocketed me away and I felt the itchy sensation of orgasm swell then burst. I throbbed, I ached, but she didn't stop. Rising up, she moved low, lips and tongue grazing across my skin leaving fiery trails of sensation. Then her mouth found my center, her tongue pressing flat against that sensitive nub which still pulsed.

Strangely enough, the flat pressure proved to be what I needed and relaxation flowed through me. The tongue lowered, lapping in the crevice with ticklish slowness, penetrating and retreating. She whispered words to that lower mouth.

“You taste so sweet,” she said.

I smiled at the ceiling, feeling years of doubt dissolving in an instant of this total love and acceptance.

Then her tongue flicked against me, against that resting nub of sensation. I gasped, surprised at the sudden leap of renewed feeling, of renewed wanting. She teased, she attacked, she retreated, her tongue a magical, musical instrument.

Someone was moaning loud, cries splitting the still air of the bedroom and I realized finally that it was me. Oh, would this never end? How many more ways would my lover consume me? I left then, my mind carrying my self away as my body took over.

Directed by her authority, I crawled to the edge of a pit—that body self—and slid over the lip of the hole to fall in slow floating, my screams of fearful pleasure ringing up into the sky above.

Then she was there, gently pulling me back, holding me as a mother, cuddling me to her breast, her lips wet against my forehead.

Psalm Ten

I trip into the ocean of scent, fall
beneath skin smelling of scarlet
losing sense of self
enmeshed in the sense of you

Diving deep...and gentle
I expound shades of serene air
hungry, trying to absorb, absorb
Skin undulates past smile

Clouded eyes welcome
and beseech
Give. Give. Give. Give.
Here, take
Breath rushes to pain my chest
and I drown eagerly in the
luscious sea of scarlet

Psalm Eleven

A gourmand
falling into you,
rose petals
dipped in honey,
I swear I shall diet

Strawberries lurk
in that unlighted
cavern of cream

I go feasting

Psalm Twelve

“SISTER,” SHE WHISPERED and hair moved like cool water across my skin. The smell of her arm, wind-kissed, the shoulder sun-baked, brought blood to my face.

“Is this what you wanted, sister,” she asked as her hand curved pregnant against my breast. Her thumb slammed the nipple and a gasp dashed from me and ran away scared.

Her eyes, brown of earth and trees, studied me slowly, the question raising one arching brow.

“I didn’t know...” I ventured.

“What? You thought it was all sweetness and light?” She laughed and I eagerly sniffed each exhalation, delirious from the fragrant incense that burned within her.

I tried to be defensive. Failed. So remained quiet as we studied one another.

Abruptly her hand found me again, sinking easily into the swamp she’d spawned minutes ago. Two fingers. Three fingers pushing a moan from my lips. Working them slowly in and out, she pressed upward, sure, knowing absolutely where to press and stroke. My clit ached from that other side and now there was an itch so deep that only she could touch it.

Her dark eyes watched, consumed my pleasure. She enjoyed what her hands could do for me.

Slithering along my body, naked breasts hard knobs against my ribs, she moved low but arced above me, wet hand trailing juice along my thigh.

“This is it, baby,” she said, crooning. “This is why you come to women.”

I raised my head and delighted in the gleaming curve her body made in the streetlight. Hair fell long about her shoulders and I craved to reach high and trap my fingers in the silk of it. The features of her face sank hollow into blackness in the contoured night of the motel room.

My choice had been right. Upon first spying her in that tired, smoky bar I had known she would be the one to do me properly— to bring me to that hot core of woman-love I desired so desperately. Everyone knew that bar as the place to find dark women, those who sold their love secretly to those of us too afraid to find it in the light of our daily lives.

Soothing words dripped across me. Lilted Spanish verses. It had to be poetry. Than a sigh, a gentle cooing as her fingertips found my clit and manipulated it roughly back and forth. Legs straddled one of my thighs and I felt her cunt there, the wet heat of it stroking. I raised my leg to better accommodate her pleasure.

Overwhelmed by the sensations roused in me, I greedily kneaded my breasts, pulling my nipples into lipsticks ready for her mouth.

She noticed right away.

“Ah, *Dios*,” she murmured and leaned to suckle me hard, the way I liked it. Yet her hand never left my clit and her fingers pushed in a harsh rhythm until I felt the geyser of orgasm upon me.

Then her right hand forced against my cunt as she reared back. The hand, fishlike, darted inside me and explosions rocked me as her fingers formed a fist—a ball-nest of dynamite ticking inside.

She stilled and I throbbed, my head rolling from side to side. I lifted my head to see her: a woman-sized cock buried in my cunt and became fascinated as I saw the slender muscles of her arm bunch when she pulled the fist. And pushed the fist. Two. Three times.

It was too much. I fell back and screamed as my cunt expanded outward, shrapnel from an exploding bomb. What was left caved in on her hand, the throbbing walls crashing against her knuckles.

Taking an eternity, she slid her hand from the black hole where my cunt had lived. The sound was that of birth; wet slick things falling one from the other.

I clutched my stomach and turned to curl fetal-like into the coarse sheets.

Silence shrouded the room.

Forgetting everything in the swelling waves of my pleasure, I tried hard to imprint it all into my brain to be recalled and savored later.

But she would not be forgotten. Tucking her body behind me, she cupped my too-sensitive breasts in one hand.

“Is it what you wanted then, *mujer blanca*?” she murmured against my cheek. I turned in her arms and my mouth found her with greedy certainty. I felt her surprise and tasted it slowly.

Wordlessly I watched her face, trying to remember colors and textures now blurred by night’s shadows. Her face would not come to me. Instead I remembered the sensual cadence of her voice as it moved across me. Leaning, I possessed her lips again, pushing in my tongue to let her know who was top; pressing hard against every wet, slick surface. I felt sound erupt from her and felt her struggle, briefly, a matter of seconds, before she relaxed against me. Her lips and mouth were a gift she opened for me and I plundered eagerly, unwrapping the essence.

Panting, we broke apart and I pressed my palm against one clove-scented breast before closing my fingers and turning the flesh roughly. I pulled the nipple, suckled the nipple, nibbled

the nipple. She arched her back to bring her tiny breasts closer to my insatiable lips. My hand slipped between her legs and the water flowing there amazed me. Her cunt lips grabbed, sucking my hand inside. I turned my fingers in the heat of her velvet softness, eliciting moans of encouragement.

She was no passive bottom. Her hands clutched the sheets and pulled them free from their bed anchor. Her voice, deep and throaty, urged me to taste her fully, the taste of her; the spice of rain forests in Brazil. My tongue trailed along her neck, paused to feast once more on her breasts and moved into the sloping valley of her belly, finally joining my hand between her legs. Timeless pushes of my tongue against the muffin of her clit and she came hard, slamming her cunt against my lips and squeezing the fingers buried deep. I rested my tongue against her and my fingers inside, enjoying the stereoelectric contractions of her clit and sleek inner walls at once.

“Yeah, sister,” I whispered finally, breath moving against dense, drenched hair. “This is exactly what I wanted.”

Psalm Thirteen

A corona of gold held you
before my arms ever did

I crave the wealth of your skin
the treasure of your mind
the currency of your passion
as it's buying into mine

I touch your golden hair
King Midas in his element
to know the power of richness
and the fear of impoverishment

The rubies of intimacy we share
the sapphires of spirit we invoke
increase iridescent opals of the soul and
purchase the honeyed passion we evoke

Psalm Fourteen

Eyes carry heat
from hearth to hearth
an ember wrapped
in the security of soul

When you look at me
I feel fire's kiss
touching is ignition
flames sweep us away

Tensing in harlequin coals
I beckon, beseech, cajole
and you tease, drawing fuel
and me until the flame...
the flame is fed

Psalm Fifteen

My face in your cunt
yes, cunt with a hard C
is dipping my tongue
into the calm eye
of a raging storm.

Soaked and pliant
you move above me
like storm wind
pregnant with lightning
eager to burn.

With rhythmic motion
you rise higher as
encouragement escapes
lips pursed from desire
Harder and harder
and faster we go
galloping onward
like some mutant
creature
better than the norm.

Each gasp snatches
at the walls of being
built deep inside me
and electric spirit rises
to ride the night.

Psalm Sixteen

I LOOK INTO your eyes and understand what it means to be wealthy.

Acceptance glows there, more important to me than money, love, more important than caring.

The caring I realize when you buy surprise tickets for gutsy Erin Mckeown, when your favorite flautist James Galway is playing across town...the same night.

The love I feel in the magnetism of our substance. I sense your unexpected presence in a crowded room. I feel you deep, raise my head, and there you are. My love.

Acceptance is the key. You mother me, wipe sauce from my mouth, make sure my clothes smell nice. You don't care that sometimes sauce moves too fast and that manure is part of my job.

And sometimes, when we're alone, we join ourselves in that ancient dance of passion. Our gazes lock and desire passes—a steaming, pulped cherry—from one to the other. You come to

me, palm smoothing my skin, fingers arching away to tease me, as your eyes ply me with erotic stories, pornographic pleasures.

I find myself in that other place, that next dimension, and I am on my knees begging you to just...there, touch me there. Carry me aloft the crest of need, the sly low of wanting, the impatient childishness of demanding now, now, now.

I hate you as I love you. No one should have this power over another. You come near, snare me with those eyes, and everyday life changes; my choices, routines, plans. Inside this bubble of timelessness dwells the convexity of your thigh, the potato scent of your hidden skin, the pull of your eyes, and the reckless smile that, when pushed forth from your stoic being, makes my heart twist sharply in ecstasy.

Wanting so to please you as you please me, I lay palms along your curves. I capture your lips with mine and pull them playfully yet slowly, first the lower then the upper, my tongue licking their moistness, warming and plumping them. I relish your moans and writhe to meet hands seeking my flesh.

I dip my own hands lower, one cupping your soft, heavy bottom while the other roams and finds furred folds. I hold all of you sandwiched between my two hands. My fingers find crevices, hot with secret heat, wet with unspoken need. I make you gasp with what my fingers find and do. With one hand I spread the heat around and around, rhythm unceasing. The other taps, taps, taps like rain.

Then I roll across you, I am a top this time and I speak this silently to your wide, surprised eyes. Relax, I say, as I whisper-touch my lips to yours. Then you are in my mouth, your tongue swirling with mine, breath fanning hot into me. I kiss you hard and long until you forget to breathe. Hours pass, days fly by, as the kiss lingers. Passion swells and my hand moves between your legs until your eyes close and hips sway to the music of my body.

I startle you by pulling my hand away but I move my lips to your breasts, suckling back and forth between the two because I know how it makes you sticky hot down below, how it makes you throb hard for release. I don't stop even when you beg and try to cover them with your arms. I pull the arms away holding wrists overhead with one hand as I use the other to cup your breast closer to my greedy mouth. This pleases you; a subtle smile curves your lips as your eyes close in intense concentration. I watch in fascination as your lips form a perfect O. You draw in air to build your excitement.

I begin to throb and sneak my free hand from your breast and down to feel my own wetness and heat. So ready for you.

Letting go your hands I indulge myself and move lower, tongue a snail following the line of your smooth torso. I go from flat desert to hot savanna and my tongue enters that flowing desert riverbed, where fluids flow steaming in the sun. I taste and taste, leaving itchy pleasure with every lap of fat, glutton tongue.

Thighs tense under my hands, the sensation of you alters subtly and I race alongside as we hurdle through the steeplechase, ride the roan mare until she sweats, sides heaving and breath bellowing. I close my eyes and press them to your thighs as I gasp my ecstasy. Supine below me you cry, for the race was all and more than you'd hoped it would be.

Psalm Seventeen

Finally you come to me
opening your all to me
moved into passion by intimacy

oh love

Held deep in the oblivion of desire
bodies friction feeding fire
relieved laughter spiraling ever higher

murky depths
push upward

Quietly we bask in the light
of gemstones we unwittingly ignite
with noises from this secret night...
the brilliance of our passion

Psalm Eighteen

I carried you
home with me,
glad there was more
than mere memory.

Though I see your face
and damned bewitching smile,
I need more to sustain me
keep me solid for a while.

And delighted I discover,
I carry your scent,
warm, rich, of the earth
so like myself, so different.

Each haphazard lifting
of hands to face
brings immediacy back,
reminds me of your taste.

Psalm Nineteen

Intimate and quiet, love comes to me
stealing in slowly, padding on soft feet

Eyes glow
Measured pools of calmness
to finally ease this warrior's quest

Welcoming sweetness of spirit high
and the quick intake of passion's rise
allow me, at last, to realize
the treasure of this sacred time

And, as passion's swell recedes
emotion destroys, builds, supersedes
only then does heart truly touch heart

Two souls unite
silent promise never to part

Psalm Twenty

MY TONGUE DANCES to the music of your kisses. Breath fans warm and wet, lips butterfly kissing, touching gentle, gentle, a bare whisper of contact. We make love slow, the ache building.

Unable to pace myself, I lift your sweater, freeing pale-tipped breasts. Greedily I taste and you draw in breath, fullness filling my mouth.

Goddess, how I love you in this moment. You cannot know; there are no words for me to tell you about it...

Kisses again. You open wide, breath hitching with spasms of excitement. We crush together and I pull away. Yes, I pull away this time and caution you to proceed slowly.

“Don’t get swept away, baby,” I say. “I want you to feel it all. Feel me, feel my touch.”

You smile and caress my face, gaze filling my eyes. You begin talking about how so often people swept up by passion lose contact. I tell you that you talk too much. You laugh and seek my lips again, hands smoothing my waist.

Within minutes I pull your sweater over your head. I pay obeisance to your upper body with my lips tongue and hands. I move lower seeking the oracle of your belly.

“Make me come,” you whisper shyly. “Will you make me come fast?”

I’m choking with delight, but mumble agreement as I seek your lips again. I slip my hand inside your trousers and begin a gentle rhythm, there, there, where desire rises to meet heaven. You cry out as I take you high, lifting, then still as you crash into a slow ebb. Again I carry you to the brink and still, leaving you hovering there at the edge. Once more and again until your hands dance a frenzied flamenco against my shoulders.

Ten minutes later your trousers fall and you moan as I press my face to your inner thighs. I smell soap and woman and warmth floods me. Slowly I tease, flicking here and there and then I taste the slight acidness, soon flooded by the sweet sweat of your passion as you writhe and groan—louder—louder until I worry the neighbors will hear. Then I don’t care. I penetrate you and feel your spasm as you pull closer then closer. With my other hand and mouth I push you over the cliff and you fall, screams muffled against your blanket.

Then, before you recover, I send my strong tongue in to press ever so firmly, seated on the throbbing nub of sensation.

Back and forth, and again until you gasp and cry out, moving your hips in a strong, familiar rotation. You stop breathing as the sensation washes over you again and you come hard, deeper than before.

I rest my cheek against your thigh.

Later our kisses sweep us into the strange place of sated peace that is beginning to exist between us so often.

You tell me that no one has been able to make you come twice and you had not believed it possible. Yet you did come twice, and hard, and I can see a new respect for me in your eyes, a new consideration than had been there before

Will we be able to come to grips with all this passing between us?

I still crave your body

Psalm Twenty-One

Skin to skin
we tumble headlong
into that other place
where time and trouble
bother unloved masses only

Carefully my hands weigh flesh
flesh puckered with rosebuds
Craving, pushing toward me
So soft and hard
I suckle, saying here, yes

Again baptizing my soul
in the hot pool
of your arousal
Anoint -- Holy Mother

oh God, oh God

Turbulence takes us
Shakes us
And we come
out new
I saw my birth in your eyes

Psalm Twenty-Two

Rain on the roof
Cold? Hot?
Flamenco of rhythm

Hot here in the blanket,
damp swamp from
sweating desire

Hot moist moves
lips mouth along my neck
I coo as water flows lower
dance tongue
in sacred places

Rain falls on
Relentless raindrops
no roof to shelter
this swamp of want

Dam burst
Overflow
So wet

Relentless rain...
beats deep in my body.

Psalm Twenty-Three

Tongues of softened silver push
coin slots in the soda 'chine

Push
Lift upward
and grind

Breath racing
Arcs above
Push
Find it
Right there
Velvet purrrrs
Happy body

Psalm Twenty-Four

Liquid
I drink thick tea
from your body
lie back refreshed
breathe grateful

And so refreshed
I skim higher
slow tongue seeks out
new flavors of wine
each slanting nook,
a taste fruity

Inebriating

Sated yet greedy

I roll away
And pull you high
split
like an orange
my thigh the juicer

I bathe in sweetness
and gulp your joy
until full, replete
I can contain no more

Psalm Twenty-Five

Murmuring
We lie together
and all that we know
subtly moves aside
sneaking away on casual feet
Magnetism scores us together
lifts us higher
and lifted high we have
no need for the world.

I drift lazy fingers
across your cheek and into
hair the color of yesterday's sun
Dark-eyed intensity questions
makes low, shuddering promises
and I feel them, needing it so
desperately
as I quake deep and wide.
Lips the texture and taste of melon
left in summer's heat
so I capture, hold them
nibble greedily at
the honey drip
An eternity passes without
notice, as new doors open

bringing stammered whispers
and presses of sultry flesh
Holding you close
we share a rhythm
of press and pull lulling
tender buttons to awareness
Curves fill my hands
as I roam exploring
soft moans sound when
my exploring hands find treasure

When I feel your touch
upon my needy skin
my stomach drops away
I hurtle down a cliff
I think I will die
if your touch moves away
Buoyed up by your hands
I can only murmur my gratitude

Psalm Twenty-Six

You wanted me and the way you
pulled me to you, offered your breasts then
rode me with high passion....

I was hypnotized and find myself
hooked completely in the aura of you
I can't recall what happened - one minute
we are at the edge of argument, the next
you are standing naked in front of me

We are on the floor and
your sweet cunt is above
me: I am wrapped in your scent
And we come together
a feat mostly missed
timing is key and you
were hot, so ready for me

The thrill of three
set me afire. Do it
again, baby, again
we feel so cherished

I carry this image of you
your mouth plundering my body
hands invading secret places
turning me different, crazy

I'm stone butch, I thought
preferring to pleasure
than be pleased but
your hands on me are so
welcome I never want to
push them away and rise
to control, to orchestrate

I'm played not player

Psalm Twenty-Seven

Marina
Like a child
I come back to you.

Mother arms.
Mother breast.
Mother love.

For nurture,
for peace.
Yes, haven from this cold
The cruel idiosyncrasies
guide briskly to despair.

Mother love harbor,
for this boat
riding frigid waters.

Psalm Twenty-Eight

My tongue savors you
like ice cream.
The chill of this water
this day
fuels the fire of our union
Ice spheres invade this patch
of low, dark hair
and wink at me
as I tongue-chase them
away one by one at a time.
Lay your cool hands
upon my iced skin
The chill of this water
this day
carries the flame of our touch.
I press into you
my lips find hidden warmth
behind your neck
hiding there hot
waiting for my cool plunder.
Give heat to me now
Start the chain reaction
Ice to Fire
Fire to Fire
Fire to Ice
Ice to Ice
We burn in this cold fire.

Psalm Twenty-Nine

Curves meander beneath
hands quaking with anticipation
Lips move wet and warm
below a possessing tongue

And cries take wing
in this sacred circle

Body rises against pleasure
as palms roam seeking
Limbs entwine completely
fragrant vines on a sun-filled day

Gyrations just short of violent
wring a shuddering release
but nourishing kisses never end
buds push forth again and again

And cries take wing
in this sacred circle

A grounding works to separate yet
tendrils of grace encourage flight
and cries take wing
sound aloft this sacred night

Psalm Thirty

I like the way that you
surrender
your will,
your emotions,
your body

to my gyration
of face and form
I go down low
lift belly

and we travel
to far shores
I carry you there,
a warm, wriggling
puppy
borne on strong hands
And though a tradition
of master and slave
exists,
implied by surrender,
you and I journey
side by side
You surrender
to my hands
I surrender
to your joy

Psalm Thirty-One

“HERE, YOUR SHOE’S untied,” she said, one hand pressing against my bicep.

We’d been walking for more than an hour, enjoying the beauty of the Potomac River from the concrete abutment running alongside. We had discussed politics, philosophy, and our relationship, progressing finally to the particular trauma of our childhoods. So this comment about my shoes, so out of context, caught me off guard, brought me from past to present with an unpleasant jolt.

“What?” I muttered, staying my forward momentum and staring stupidly in her direction. Her smile, impish and more adorable than the day we’d met, centered me in its spotlight. “Your shoe,” she cooed, eyes softening in the final gasping rays of the day’s sun. “It’s untied. Look.”

I turned my gaze downward and found the observation to be true. The thick laces of my right athletic shoe lolled across the concrete like beached seaweed.

“And the other’s about ready to go,” she added, taking my hand. She pulled me toward one of the many benches lining the abutment and pushed me into the seat. I had a momentary confusion as to whether I should enjoy the panorama of river and twilight spread before me or

the closer comfort of her lovely face. The gorgeous green eyes won out, irresistibly drawing my attention.

“What are you doing?” I asked with a small laugh.

“You big, bad dykes are all the same,” she responded, “terrific in bed, but lousy at taking care of yourselves.”

“I do all right, “I said, teasing. “But if you want the job...”

The expression she gave me murmured contentment as she knelt on the concrete. “You certainly need what I can provide,” she said.

When she raised her eyes, I was stunned by the raw sensuality simmering there. And immediately aroused. Heat ignited at my core and radiated upward into my cheeks. She smiled a lopsided, sexy smile and reached to unbutton the top few buttons of her shirt.

“It seems warm this evening, doesn’t it,” she said, her voice dripping innocence. I smiled my indulgence. The air from the river was

unseasonably cool. Her breasts, pushed into pillows by her undershirt, filled my world and made me forget any weather but the storm of passion whirling within me

“Getting hotter all the time,” I agreed.

Dropping her gaze, she leaned forward to pull taut the laces of my shoe. The movement roused the muscles of her chest and I was treated to a show that made my teeth clench. Her movements were slow, measured in doses of enticement, an elixir she possessed in endless supply. Sensing my unflagging interest, she lifted her lashes in slow motion and a Mona Lisa smirk perched on her unpainted lips.

“Does that feel better, baby?”

One slim hand found my calf and eased upward, the palm warm even through the denim of my jeans. I pulled my eyes from her and made sure no one else shared our penchant for evening shenanigans. The abutment was deserted and again I snared her eyes with mine.

“Yeah,” I whispered, “feels much better.”

I placed my hand over hers and encouraged the upward movement until I felt her body heat against my cunt. Her fingers pressed with knowing accuracy and my eyes fell shut to enjoy the pure sensation. Teasing, she pulled her hand away too fast and I moaned with remorse.

“Your other shoe,” she reminded me.

This one took longer as she had to untie and retie the laces. I burned as I watched her slow, tantalizing movements. Finished finally, she sought my gaze and noted the fire there. Gaining her feet she looked along the dusk-shrouded river to make sure we were alone then climbed aboard to place a knee on the outside of each of my thighs. The familiar scent of her perfume engulfed me and I wrapped my arms about her ass to pull her torso closer so I could bury my face in the soft convex of her belly. The sudden intake of her breath pressed the convexity closer and I reveled in the warm fragrant bakery of her.

“Ahhh, fuck,” I told her as my hand found cunt through her jeans. “What you do to me, baby. You have no idea.”

Her smile said otherwise as her lips caught mine in cool wetness. Tongue found tongue and danced a slow minuet. Her breasts sought mine through our shirts and jackets but her hands found them first and teased the peaks with tender pinches. A sudden surge of sensation down below sent her gasping and she grabbed the bench rails behind me so she could push and pull her cunt against the trusted firmness of my hand. Payback is hell, however, and I snatched my hand away to reach under her shirt.

Her breasts were hard and needy. I lifted the shirt, clamped my mouth to one nipple and pressed my hand back between her legs all in one swift movement.

Alarmed, she tried to lower the shirt without detaching my suckling mouth and sent a searching gaze about. I allowed her to be in charge of crowd control. I was in one of my favorite places and wasn't coming out for anyone. My hand moved against her cunt as I moved my mouth back and forth, trying to equally love both breasts. Her movements grew more even and I knew she was stroking herself to the edge. I followed along, a vicarious traveler on her journey. Small whimpering sounds accompanied us but I wasn't sure whether it was her or me making them.

Her orgasm was quiet but powerful as she sank her teeth into my shoulder and shuddered against my forearm. I lolled back, resting my arms and met her kisses with a gentle, lapping tongue.

“Hey now, what's this,” called a voice to my left. We turned our heads and saw one of DC's finest walking his beat. Still a good two hundred feet from us, he nevertheless took offense to the fact we were so intertwined in public.

Leaping up, she grabbed my hand and we raced away into the night, our laughter filling the dark void behind us.

Psalm Thirty-Two

Desire once
Desire twice
Desire life

Happen mind
upon the night
of writhing shadow
and endless light

Need calls
an ancient tune
of Father Sun
and Mother Moon

and nightfall
to moon rises
sing melodies
to the Sun

Forever light
Forever heat

Desire fire
one can depend
rises like sun
bound into moon

Psalm Thirty-Three

Loving you
desiring you
is pain enough

Sharing you
with your life

should be outlawed

I want your
flesh --
against mine

I want your
lips --
against mine

I want our
souls --
to soar
Work is bother
when I know
I should be
inside your skin

other people
a nuisance
Two of us
can be a world

Psalm Thirty-Four

Testing the Water
I study as love swells in your eyes,
your breath a warm cloth laid against my cheek

Inside something bigger hopes,
larger than our two pale bodies wrapped

Aching, hesitant, I limp emotion closer,
baring my own handicap for you to see

Trusting you, yet...

Closing tight my eyes, I wait for your retreat
wincing in expectation of that final blow

And then it comes, gentle, altogether different;
a chuck under the chin with fingers trailing my scent

I open eyes wide with disbelieving expectation
and see welcoming, the greatest gift of all:
the face of acceptance, of love unconditional
You take my bruised emotion and tuck it safely away

Filled with sudden glee, I laugh, pull us breast to breast
With lips, tongue, and hands, I tuck my body in as well

Psalm Thirty-Five

THE TENDERNESS, WHICH I love so much, continues. I'm glad we managed to get together for lunch after you get off work. It's good to see you. The glow of the day before lingers and all I can do is look at you for a long time.

You are cheerful and new hope for our life together blooms. You tell me what a wonderful time you had shopping with me and though I shyly brush your praise away—after all what did I do except listen to you—I am consumed by joy. At last you have noticed me and perhaps, are beginning to care about the everyday things I do for you. I realize suddenly how deeply I seek your attention and approval.

We lunch quietly on salads and soup, talking about the egg rolls you took home for dinner the night before. I forget to ask how you heated them with a broken oven and no microwave, as well as how the blinds fit your windows. Did we get the right width? I hate the way I always think of things to ask or say after we are apart and I cannot call you.

Why did you ask me if I meant what I said yesterday? I know you feel affectionate, maybe sexual when you ask this. My heart thrills; perhaps you find me desirable, just a little. My own desire swells.

“I have an overwhelming urge to kiss you, right there,” I tell you, nodding toward your throat where the delicate flesh is concave, where a strong pulse moves just beneath the skin.

“Where?” You ask this impishly, one hand rising in inspection.

“There,” I tell you gesturing, “where it dimples.”

With lust in my soul, I once again assure you of my feelings and you nod toward the bathroom of the restaurant.

“Care to join me?” Your smile is filled with seductive power. And though I doubt the wisdom of this careless action, nevertheless follow, helpless in your spell.

As the door closes you are in my arms, your soft curves pressing into me as your lips and tongue probe my mouth. Crystal points of desire prick inside and I feel I shall die if I don’t possess you completely right this minute. Ah, but you back off, breath matching the hoarse intensity of mine. Then you move closer.

“Wow,” you murmur against my lips. “See what happens when we’re together?”

“Why can’t we do this all the time,” I say as I press you against the wall. My mouth possesses yours as I release a bit of the control I keep on myself when I’m with you.

“Oh, you do that well,” you gasp. My strong hands discover your curves, eventually capturing your breasts. Just as I lower my head to sample their sweetness, a loud knock sounds on the door. Defeated, deflated, I fall back. You smile at me and shrug as you lower your shirt. How shall we get out of here, the both of us? This bathroom has only one toilet.

I call out an acknowledgment and, giggling like schoolgirls, we straighten our clothes. Last before we unlatch the door, I tell you to flush.

Psalm Thirty-Six

Life too close
come closer
to see
skin valley
frown lines
Sunday morning sleepies

Snuggle close
against chin
eroded soft by years

heart moves
sluggish
How many beats to go?

Forearm hair
burnt sand
breath snatch in, out
blood flees quaking
from a pushy fingertip

pulled together
too close
and I walk
the landscape of you

Psalm Thirty-Seven

It was cold there
The chill nipped my ears
The wind played
merry-go-round
whispered phrases
to circle my head

Blowing on the hands
can't be felt
the way I feel for you

Frosted passion

Those who know
say freezing to death
is warm

I think I may be

The vibrant warmth
blows from your eyes
Sapphires of quality

I could lose myself
and, freezing to death
never feel the cold again

Revelation

We Lose...

Passage One

There was life lurking
(my life as it seems)
within your blue eyes

Then suddenly, unexpectedly,
a shout of “surpri-i-se”
as you pointed over my shoulder

Dark death stood behind me,
a spiritual, not a physical thing
And he grinned

When I turned back to you,
I saw what I’d not seen before
There was only coldness

Though frightened of the death behind,
I couldn’t tear my gaze away
watching the dancing death in your eyes

Passage Two

In reply to chains
Don't try to change me,
it will never work
Changing is something
I have to do myself

You can lead me if you've a mind to
but please, leave the chains at home
Gentle pressure from a friendly hand
is all the persuasion I need

You can make love over me
but you cannot, in love,
make me over

Passage Three

HER BAGS WERE packed. Placed neatly beside the front door, they seemed to hum with purposeful intent. I closed the door and sighed. My eyes raked across the bags and I despised the hateful first thought that entered my mind; had she taken anything of mine?

“Well, there you are. I was beginning to think I would have to leave without saying goodbye.”

Kim stood in the doorway to the den, her lustrous black hair piled in unusual disarray. I let my gaze travel slowly across her one last time, filing away how her angular cheekbones accented her swarthy features, how her acute slimness gave her a certain air of elegance, of sleekness. God, I was going to miss her.

“Tally, aren't you going to talk to me?” She poked her bottom lip out in that adorable pout I was far too familiar with.

“Yeah. Listen, I’m sorry about the fight. I didn’t mean what I said. I don’t know what gets into me sometimes.” I lifted apologetic eyes.

To my surprise, Kim smiled. A real smile too, like in the old days. It was a big improvement over the pinched smirks I’d been getting for the past few months.

“It’s that damned Irish temper, is all,” she explained, as if I didn’t know anything about it. “I’m all right. You don’t have to fret about it.”

I walked to the hall butler and shed my damp overcoat. With my back to her I found it was easier to share my feelings.

“Well, I do worry. I never wanted this to happen, Kim.” There, the door was opened... just a little.

Kim sighed and strode forward to drop an overnight bag on top of the orderly pile of suitcases. She stood just behind me and my back ached to feel her palm against it.

“It makes sense this way, hon. I feel relieved, better than I have in a long time and I bet if you examined your feelings, you’d find you feel the same way.”

Anger bubbled inside and I pulled further away from her. “I don’t have a Carla to curl up with, or an Amy to whisper to me that I’ve done the right thing.” I regretted the scathing words as soon as they left my mouth.

Kim stiffened, the words finding their mark. “That’s okay. You’ll have your career to keep you company,” she said with a sneer.

Throwing my hands in the air, I tugged at my mop of short hair with all ten fingers. “Ah, hell, Kimmy. Nobody can make me as angry as you.”

She smiled with enigmatic calm. “I guess that’s my special charm.”

I eyed her sideways, finding myself smiling in spite of the pain and rage I was feeling. “Do you still care for me?” I asked, feeling like a wheedling child.

Kim lifted her eyes to the ceiling as if seeking divine guidance. “You’re the one who kicked me out, Tally. I would stay if you asked me.”

“But you won’t give up the others.” I snorted disdainfully.

“I told you I’d try. I work with Carla though, that would be tough.” Her gaze was sad.

And she wasn’t about to give up her hard won job in interior design, I knew that from a previous argument. Futility swamped me and I could only stand and watch her. Silence fell between us.

Three years of my life gone. She was walking away with them as easily as carrying out her well-stuffed bags. I would never be able to remember our years together. The pain would destroy me.

A list of ‘if only’s’ rattled through my brain. If only I hadn’t worked so much. If only I hadn’t spent quite so much time studying. If only I had been a better lover.

Then anger returned. If only Kim had remained faithful. A hard knot swelled my throat closed and hot tears threatened to blur my vision.

“Hey, help me carry these out, will you?” Kim asked in a gentle voice. She sighed and I knew she felt the same futility I was fighting. There seemed to be no easy way. It was a lose-lose situation.

I silently opened the front door and hefted two of the bags. Kim gathered the rest and followed.

Her Honda station wagon rested next to my Trooper for the last time. I opened the back door of the Honda and tossed the bags onto the back seat, holding the door wide so she could place the other bags inside. Trying to feel useful, I pressed the lock button and closed the door securely. Then I couldn’t find a place to put my hands, hands which felt as if they belonged on Kim.

Then Kim came into my arms, her cheek pressed against my shoulder. She felt so right there, so familiar.

She lifted her face and our kiss was soft and forlorn, filled with a longing for what should have been. Afterwards, she moved away and I felt a coldness enter the space where she had been.

Kim stood at the car and stared up at the huge brick home we had lived in for the past three years. She rubbed her thinly clad arms, shivering in the early morning chill. “I’m glad you got the house, Tally. Really. I told my lawyer that. I’m just sorry he was such an asshole about the whole thing.”

I shrugged, dog-paddling like hell in an emotional sea. “He’s one of those holy rollers who dislikes lesbians. I had him pegged from the get go.”

Kim grimaced and nodded agreement.

“I’m sorry we can’t love each other anymore,” I whispered finally.

“That’s not it. We’re just traveling in different directions. It happens.”

We fell silent, mulling over this obvious truth. A cool mist began to blow against us and Kim shivered again.

“Tally, if you ever need anything...” Her voice cracked in mid-sentence.

I nodded and, unable to speak because that damned lump was choking me again, I grimaced in what I hoped was a smile and waved Kim away. I turned and walked into the house.

Closing the door, I heard the engine of Kim's car purr into life, a mechanical opposite to the dead memories filling the rooms behind me. I pressed my face to the heavy wooden door panels and softly wailed my grief. "But I need you!" I cried. "I need you!"

Passage Four

I race to you like wildfire
with expectation;
a small child on Christmas morn

Desire has carved a friendly path
to you -- to me
and I rush along it, pell-mell

Then your frowning face stops me abrupt
Judgmental parent
Eagerness falls and I am taken back

And step into the darkness of being alone
peeking over to see you wallow
in your self-spit cocoon of grief and sorrow

And you judge me -- too happy
and you call me deluded
my life is imperfect you say

There's one truth I know
deluded, misguided, or no
Life is life -- a murderous bitch
But life is what we have, to hold, to give
And we can shape it
if we try, try again, and open the door

But when I run to you with eager desire

and you turn me away, celibate queen,
we both lose the goodness of life's joy

Passage Five

Caged within my arms
your heart
hard beneath my ear
belies the calmness
of your skin

The grass is always greener
over there...over there...

Where this heart marches
you follow
though charred emotion
steams behind

Greater love hath no woman
better there...better there...

I feel you drifting
and swallow dry tears
for there's no competing
with better over there
The heart that flutters
beneath my ear
is the caged bird
caught by my loving hands

Passage Six

I know I must break away
Leave you to the gilded cage
but pain shakes my heart
and I sense the power of rage

Why can't you overcome?
Why can't you feel free?
Why can't you let go of yourself
enough to love me?

The trap I've fallen into
(swore it wouldn't happen to me)
is a chasm so deep and steep,
I climb, but there's no reprieve

Teach me how to kill passion
Please, no slow, wasting death
but a bonfire blaze of glory,
big enough for you to be scorched

I want you to remember

Passage Seven

Venus with a mirror
I saw your warmth
on a cool museum wall
as I worshipped the god
of fine art

Surprise, you said
I stood transfixed, ensnared
surely it was you there
in full bloom

Forced from your side
by responsibility,

the painting brought today's
harsh yearning
Titian captured you
in shades of pink and crimson
and gave Cupid a crown
of my love

I covet velvet
and fur, curved about your flesh,
jealous of the hand pressed
to your breast

Envious of mirrored
glow as held by Cherubim
It dare cradles your skin
as I should

I stared too long
rudely blocking others' view
as I loved my Venus from
a cold place
much too far away

Passage Eight

Your misery finds me;
condensation on glass
heavy and clinging,
cold somehow.

A temperament forgetful
allows personal misery
to fade off into
yesterday's no consequence,
and tomorrow's yet to be

I don't understand
the arguments.
I seem to be an educated idiot

complacent grinning fool
happy with my life
- and life in general.

yet you
with gnawing discontent
see no sunlight
in summer storms
and no voice of reason
in the blowing winds of December.

Passage Nine

“TELL ME ABOUT your first lover,” said Lilith.

She slipped a thin slice of apple into her mouth, with neat grace, as she turned a curious gaze upon Madison.

Madison was unusually relaxed this afternoon. She lay sprawled against a tall stump, her skin white against the dark, thready brown. Naked from the waist up, it was evident how healthy her skin was, her flesh surprisingly firm for a woman approaching her fiftieth year.

It was the musculature. Madison had this passion for weight lifting. Pulling metal, she called it. And it wasn't a quest for fitness or vanity—no one was less vain than Madison—rather it was because she loved the exertion, the sensation of pitting muscle against the thickness of steel.

“My first lover? Sheesh, ancient history. Male or female?”

“Female.” Lilith's lips captured a new slice of apple.

Madison's demeanor became thoughtful. “Her name was Debbie, the daughter of our housekeeper.”

She fell silent, calm eyes roaming the surrounding forest. She seemed lost in pleasant reverie.

Watching her, chewing absently, Lilith admired the pensiveness.

“Did you love her?”

Madison laughed, tucking her head in that adorable way she had. “What is love? Of course I did. I guess.”

“Tell me what she was like.”

“Giggly, yet she could be serious. I loved the way her body felt under my hands. All wet. And spongy firm.”

Lilith felt herself begin to blush and ignored it. This was something she felt she needed to know. She had no idea why, exactly, this was so important. “So the two of you did... How old were you?”

Shrugging, Madison turned and seemed to study the flush Lilith knew was staining her face. It always amazed Lilith how the two of them could be so prim in daily life and so rowdy when making love. Of course, the alcohol helped, relaxing them both to abstraction.

“We must have been about ten or eleven. She was my best friend ‘cause there were no other kids on the estate. That sounds like I didn’t like her. I did. But mom and dad ragged on me all the time about hanging out with the housekeeper’s kid. I hated those other kids they threw at me, like at parties. Those kids had a hard edge to them. Debbie was nice, kinda soft, warm.”

She paused and stroked idly at one breast as if searching for specks of debris deposited by an imaginary wind.

“I feel like I’ve been searching for that warmth ever since. I suppose it equates to unconditional love. No matter what I said or did to her, the next time I saw her it was like it never happened. She was all fuzzy toward me again. I’ll never forget that.”

“Is that why you’re that way toward me?” Lilith asked, leaning to press her own naked breasts against her drawn-up thighs. She wrapped slender arms about her knees as she awaited an answer. “I know I give you a hard time sometimes.”

“I guess. Just seems right somehow.”

She turned her eyes on Lilith and Lilith felt that strange bodyquake deep within that signaled her arousal. Panicking, she pulled her gaze away and studied her sandal-clad toes.

“Besides, I can never stay mad at you.” Madison’s voice had softened but had grown in timbre as her deep sensuality took over. Lilith heard the rustle of dried grass and snatched high her eyes in time to see Madison stalking her on palms and knees, a great white panther, long dark hair cascading down to hide her swaying breasts. Her blue eyes burned into Lilith’s and dark fear constricted Lilith’s lungs until she thought she’d pass out if she tried to rise and run away. Knowing the fear was foolish, she took great gulps of air and forced herself to relax as Madison

approached. Then Madison's firm lips captured hers and she swept away on a rain-swollen cataract, out of control, to a place that terrified and angered her.

"Mmm, you feel pretty warm," Madison joked some time later as she pulled away to study her lover. "Wanna go find a soft spot in the trees?" Her eyes invited with cobalt passion.

Lilith smiled nervously. "I don't think so, Maddy. Anyone could be out here."

Madison snorted and sat back on her haunches. "I don't think so. This is private land, once owned by my daddy and his daddy before him. Now my dear husband, Ashley has bequeathed it to me. I don't think anyone could penetrate that wall of ownership, do you?"

Lilith had to laugh at Madison's logic yet she remained unmoved. Helplessly her right hand crept up and smoothed the outer edge of one breast displayed so enticingly above her. Madison took in a long shuddering breath and closed her eyes to better savor the sensation. After some time she opened her eyes and fixed them on Lilith. "Changing your mind, baby?"

Lilith dropped her hand. "Why do you always push me, Madison? Why is it always sex with you?"

Hearing the death knell of irritation in Lilith's voice, Madison dropped down beside her. Her lean hands plucked up the carved apple core from the ground. She began swinging it back and forth from the fulcrum of stem. She said nothing in reply.

Passage Ten

Back off
Love does hurt
It slaps with little
Smiles
Bites with little
Glances
In love does mean
Falling
Scraped knees, hell, scrapped
Heart
Tears blossom behind
Roses

Thorns push and push
Tearing
Caring is shark teeth drawing
Blood
Yet the bearer laughs and
Grins
Coos about the decent-at-last
Relationship
Benevolence shines in the
Eyes
As hidden claws rip
Apart
I love you
yet Back off
Love me
yet Back off
Share with me
yet Back off
Your life with me
yet Back off
Come to me
yet Back off
I want honesty
yet Back off
I want intimacy
yet Back off
You're my soul mate
yet Back off
I desire you
well, Jack off

Passage Eleven

Was it when you were little,
angel eyes and cherub smile,
heart not quite lacerated
by life's unrelenting knife?

Is that when he touched you?

Forced his sexuality upon you?
Panther-lust rocketing you away
as he invaded your baby thirst....

I'm left with the remains of
a shattered little-girl smile.
I swear it makes me cry
open to me, woman lost

I'm not the men who hurt you
I'm the woman who loves you
Yet you run away, screaming
lost in the night of your pain

And my loving hands are tied
for the violence of showing
becomes the violence of them
and in this lingering...

we both lose

Passage Twelve

I became a man today.

My erection was powerful,
a throbbing slab of meat
uncomfortable in that place
which whispers my womanhood

My being, all that I am,
was focused on that site
as I craved you, imagined you
pulled fiercely into embrace

Everything I have to offer -
spirit, body, soul, my love -
was pooled into that prominence
reaching heavenward toward you

My mind savored you
as my body pulsed a request
Too bad you weren't there
Celibate Queen

I became a man today
A woman with no woman to love

I understand the violence

Passage Thirteen

Jerked one way
pulled the next
The power you hold

You take my love
yet deny
my passion

An executive decision

Jerked one way
pulled the next
Power and control

Your smiles invite
as your legs close gently

I hang
suspended by my love for you

Rope becomes thread
I look upward and pray

Passage Fourteen

When in the course of time
as love waits, pulsating and ready,
emotion begins to fade, weaken;
it becomes unsteady.

Who can draw up,
and give an explanation
as to why and to remedy
feeling's expiration?

Who can confront and confess
honestly to man's carelessness?
And why one should leave
so painfully unfulfilled,
that precious love throbbing
until dead and stilled

Passage Fifteen

There in the grass
you beckon to me

Desire blinds my mind

Your power over me never ends,
like creamed moonlight in a diamond
I wish I'd never gotten tangled
in your web of dominance

I've lost myself to
a rebellion of the spirit;
a war against the power of desire

Passage Sixteen

Often I remember
the little girl of me
wearing warnings in her hair
rules and regulations
in each fold of her dress.

Little girls don't,
a plain and simple truth
but if they do
when they do
the loss is priceless

I think about
when I did
about each time I did
and the loss encountered there
priceless – mourned
That fearful little girl of me
who did what she did
when she did
already tasting the offense
a bitter juice upon her tongue

older now with eyes sharpened
by the acrid spit of loss
I can watch the little girl
and see what she did
when she did
was as natural as walking
a toddler's tentative step
toward inexorable death
priceless – mourned

And the little girl of me
who did what she did
when she did
wasn't the bad girl who shouldn't
but the little girl who did
and only that will matter

Passage Seventeen

I DESIRED CONNIE in a big way. But the complexity of that desire was so intense I didn't think I had the stamina to deal with it. The first obstacle was my own sedate, middle-class existence. I was married, with children.

Then there was the possibility of becoming the new too-large topic of conversation in a too-small town. My pristine castle of normalcy, constructed carefully by years of mindless socializing, could easily topple.

Of course the husband was well aware of my Sapphic tendencies. How can you hide such a fact from a man whose sexual fantasies included lesbian love? But, even knowing and approving, he would be shamed if such knowledge became public.

And what about the fragile web that binds close friends together? The web that could be rent so easily by a hasty move, a confusing touch. I might lose Connie's valuable friendship forever.

Which might happen anyway, I thought grimly as I worked the sun-warmed earth of my vegetable garden. It was hard being around Connie these days without reckless erotic impulses taking hold. What was it that drew me to Connie, anyway? It had been a long time since I felt compelled to act on my admiration for a woman friend's form and personality.

Besides, that free love longing for the female touch should have been left smothered in the mud at Woodstock. Wasn't it selfish to feel such desire when my life ought to be devoted to husband-pleasing and child-raising?

There was something about Connie, though, a beguiling innocence and sweetness, with a touch of saucy sexuality underneath it all. It mesmerized me.

Connie's prodigious talent captivated me as well; no one else could paint with Connie's keen perception. She managed to epitomize the very essence of womanhood on her canvasses, using sweeping moon curves to capture the vulva while shrouding the whole in mysterious, vibrant colors.

Her paintings of the faceless Goddess, with their pale hourglass forms, carried me back to primal womanhood, stirring feelings which danced like desert wind inside me.

I stood and brushed clean the knees of my ragged jeans.

Spring-livened birds twittered on all sides and I lifted my face to the sun, seeking healing fire to replace the carnal furnace which was beginning to scorch me much too often.

Perhaps I was mistaking a feminist, sister-type affection for physical attraction. We had much in common, me and Connie, especially when it came to the creative forces that drove us both and the wellspring of woman-power we relished. Yet we were very different. It was precisely these differences which I coveted so fiercely.

Deep reflection had shown me that part of my desire was a desperate longing for the past—for the almost unbearable tenderness I'd shared with a female lover more than a decade earlier.

Disillusioned and bereft when left alone, I married and tried to fill the void with children and a busy life. Not enough, not enough. After a few furtive, unsatisfactory affairs, I had gotten into the habit of believing there were no more women left in this hectic technological society who could give and take the sensual delight.

And this belief had worked, too, forming a miraculous shield against pain and against true involvement—the kind of involvement that undulates into the cosmos. Then I had gotten close to Connie and discovered the shield bore holes. Holes the size of dinner plates.

A startling tear dampened the soil at my feet as I bent to retrieve the seed bucket. Wearily, I stabbed at the spot with my bare, dirt-shadowed toe.

I turned, loosing a troubled sigh, to walk back to the house and heard Connie's beloved voice sound beside me.

“What are you planting? Isn't it too cold yet?”

Connie was wearing her crystal earrings today and bright sunlight caught and rebounded in one of them, blinding me momentarily.

“Just lettuce. If you plant it early, the leaves stay sweeter longer,” I answered evenly. “You have to protect it if you have a late frost though.”

Silence fell, but it was an easy one. A brisk wind rushed by and we both tilted our heads to better let it caress us. The sound of the river washed loudly between us, echoing against the ridge behind. A bold rabbit, no doubt sensing the feast soon to come, poked his head from a thicket near Connie's foot. Spying him, she tapped the foot, and he scurried away with an indignant rustle.

Feeling better suddenly, and unsure why, I stepped over to Connie and hugged her tightly.

“What are you doing out and about today? I thought you were going to paint,” I said against the cool, fragrant skin of Connie’s cheek. Connie studied my face with tender, pensive eyes, one calloused hand fluttering with surprising grace to stroke my brow.

“I wanted to talk with you,” she replied softly.

I moved back and watched her keenly for some clue as to what was to come. Placing the bucket to one side, I dropped to sit tailor-fashion upon the grass and patted a spot next to me.

“Here, sit. Are you okay?”

Connie smiled wryly and lowered herself to the ground. “I’m never okay, you know that.” She slipped her jacket from her slim shoulders and let it fall in folds behind. “Do you remember the talk we had the other day?”

“Huh?” I wrinkled my nose as I tried to remember a specific conversation.

Then suddenly, with the clarity and panache of a ringing bell, I knew what was coming. And felt relief wash over me. Connie’s words were sure to be a blow, a chip snapped from the delusion of my own self as ultimately desirable to the other woman, but at least the decision would be taken from me and I could free this aggressive desire.

“You mean the one about the hefty time requirements of building relationships?”

Connie nodded. “You know I don’t express myself well...”

She laughed self-consciously and I felt bidden to ease the situation.

“But you want to say that you’re devoting your life to work right now and have no time left for a relationship,” I said softly as she looked away.

Connie dropped her chin to her chest and studied a blade of grass.

“Well, to be honest, I already have some...arrangements...with other women.”

My smile was brittle. “But just no time for building a new relationship.”

“Not now, not with the new show,” Connie said. She tried to meet my eyes but it was a minute or two before I could look at her. Gazing into the eyes of my friend, I knew Connie really did love me and it was going to be okay.

“How about continuing a good friendship?” I asked with a genuine grin. “Or maybe we could be nodding acquaintances.”

Healing laughter bloomed in the busy spring air and while walking Connie to her car, I realized why Connie could drive away now without destroying me.

With a slow, tender embrace of farewell, the harsh physical craving evaporated. I still loved Connie, but it was without that profound carnality; it was a love that transcends desire. I knew then that love is unconditional. Even if, heaven forbid, I never saw Connie again, it would be all right. I was content with the knowledge that I cared enough for Connie to see her go. And I knew I would always possess a little facet of Connie, even if that tiny side, that one gleaming surface, was merely the reflection of my own love for my dearest friend, my Connie.

Passage Eighteen

Who are we that we should be
older than we thought we'd be?
A subtle failing of grip or sight
heralds a descent into the age of night.

Lofty ambitions go unmet.
Time and circumstance aid and abet.
Things are better left unsaid
and regretted for a time after we're dead.

Life pushes us along too fast
forcing a future with nary a past.
How amiably we accept such a fate
wishing to live only when it's gone too late.

Passage Nineteen

Just try to hide it

Happiness is revealed
but then, so is sorrow
It's all in the eyes

Sunglasses sometimes help
but not too often
Sad eyes like to sneak down
and surround the mouth

Passage Twenty

What is it about this gnawing?
Disillusion's face is a hometown friend
And though no amount of glut will satisfy,
still you keep trying, again and again

What is it about this hunger?
Desperately seeking spiritual cover
Flesh emerging onto a higher plane by
denying kisses to a mortal lover

Gentleness, a sense of peace,
a fragile, tender caress
If the creator brought us here, gave us
life, does he owe us any less?

Passage Twenty-One

THINKING BACK, SHE would remember the hot, early summer day the yard was finished as the day before disaster.

Ellie spent the night at her house, the two of them still eager explorers in the land of new passion. They rose early, however, breakfasted, then immediately began work on the yard.

The small crew that had helped shape the project during the past few months was gone, paid off the week before. The only remaining work was the planting of bulbs and a regular mowing; jobs Ellie felt she and Karen could handle easily.

They worked hard all morning, Ellie mowing the wide expanse of grass and clipping the weeds along the walkway, and Karen planting box after box of bulbs in the circular gardens on either side of the front yard and the house.

The day was a scorcher, even for southern North Carolina, with a hot wind blowing from the west, and temperatures hovering just above one hundred degrees. Karen left her work often to fetch pitchers of iced water from inside.

A storm threatened about eleven, but it passed over, leaving only a few fat drops to sizzle on the sidewalk.

They stopped for a lunch of cool gazpacho and bread, talking amiably about a new county ordinance that would affect Ellie's parents, forcing them to move a long line of fencing, a major undertaking.

Ellie told Karen she wanted her to meet her parents.

"What are you going to tell them about me," Karen asked her with a snort of laughter. "That I've adopted you?"

Anger invaded Ellie's voice. "No, I'll tell them you're my friend. And you are, aren't you?"

"Yes, but really, I'm too old to meet your parents. You're twenty-four and I'm forty eight. I don't think it's a good idea."

"Come on, Karen, please?" Ellie had used her best wide-eyed puppy-dog look to snare Karen's affections. It worked.

"All right," Karen conceded, "I'll meet your parents. You set it up."

"We can go there any Sunday for dinner. I've already asked," Ellie replied gleefully.

Back outside, they leapt with enthusiasm into the last leg of their yard work. But after a while, Karen found herself pausing often to stand back and survey her new, lovely yard.

True to Ellie's plans, waxy green azaleas now rested against the white siding of her house, planted in two long gardens which stretched horizontally all along the front. These azalea gardens had shorter greenery planted in the foreground and were bordered by long four-inch by four-inch lengths of weather-treated wood.

Two mock orange bushes, one on either side of the concrete steps leading to the wide verandah, were already beginning to burst into fragrant bloom.

New fruit trees, a Yellow Delicious apple, a freestone Elberta peach, and even a Nanking cherry tree, bloomed haphazardly in her side yard. The occasional flower blossomed under the trees in neat little beds full of soft greenery.

The scent was captivating, new soil, new plants. Karen even fancied the air was richer with oxygen than it had been before.

Graveled, bordered walkways branched off the main walk just before the front steps and led to the vegetable garden in back. Lavender, with short, woody foliage bearing a muted mauve color, outlined the curving paths.

Karen reached and grasped the slim trunk of the willow tree that stood in the middle of the garden she had been planting, the whip like branches swaying in response to her touch.

“It’s amazing what money can buy,” Karen murmured to herself, rubbing her free hand through her short gray hair.

“What’d you say?” Ellie asked. She was on her hands and knees, clipping weeds along the edge of the front walk.

“I said, it’s amazing what money can buy.”

Ellie sat back on her haunches and looked up at Karen with candid green eyes. “Do you like what we’ve done? Is it what you wanted?”

“Yes, absolutely. I’m very pleased.”

Ellie grinned at the praise and bent back to her work, pushing her mass of tousled blond hair away from her forehead with the back of one hand. “Yeah, and a lot more would get done if some of us would quit admiring it and get back to work,” she said teasingly.

Karen groaned, but dutifully returned to her task. She had planted only a few bulbs when Ellie’s voice snared her.

“What are you doing?” Ellie asked, her tone quick and sharp.

“Planting bulbs, what’s the matter?”

“Oh, no.” Ellie lifted an empty box. “Where did you plant these?”

“In this circular row you laid out. Just like you told me.”

“And these?” She held a second, smaller box. “Where are these?”

“Outside the others.”

The younger woman shook her head and slammed the grass stained clippers against her denim covered thigh.

“Ellie, what is wrong with you?”

“Damn it, Karen. I told you to plant this box here, and this box in the outside circle. Now you’ve gone and screwed up the whole design.”

“I did not!” Karen protested hotly. “You told me to put these here and these over here.”

“I’m not that stupid. Now the shorter tulips will come out behind the taller daffodils.”

“Oh, and you’re implying I am that stupid?”

“Hey, you said it, not me.”

“Look, I was only following your orders. I always follow your orders.”

“Oh, you’re saying I’m bossy now.”

“Hey, you said it, not me.”

A long silence grew between them.

Then a smile crept in and touched the corners of Ellie’s mouth. Quickly, she stuck out her tongue to an amazed Karen.

“Naa, na na, na na, naaaa,” she said in a schoolyard chant, jumping to her feet and turning to shake her small, dirt-covered bottom at Karen.

“Ellie? What...”

Ellie began hopping about like a demented elf, landing on one foot, then the other.

“Karen did a boo boo—now she’s gotta dig it—all up and do it again,” she sang out loudly.

Karen laughed as she watched Ellie’s antics. “Like hell I will. I’m not doing all that work again.”

Ellie stood still, breathing heavily. “Yes, you will,” she said in a light sing-song, “or I’ll get your hiney.”

“You’ll get my...” Karen didn’t say more because she realized Ellie was preparing to give chase.

“Uh, oh,” she managed to mutter before racing madly toward the front door. Ellie was fast on her heels calling, “Here hiney, here hiney!”

They hit the door together but Karen squeezed through first and flew toward the back of the house.

With a wicked, reverberating laugh in a deep voice, Ellie paused to lock the front door, a move that would haunt her later, before she resumed stalking her prey.

“Here, hiney!” she called as she advanced toward the kitchen. “I’m gonna get you now.”

A muffled giggle betrayed Karen’s hiding place behind the kitchen door but as Ellie whirled, Karen swept past and raced away from her into the bedroom.

Ellie crept slowly toward the bedroom, occasionally whistling a soft summons.

Although the bedroom was empty, Ellie chuckled and crossed rapidly to whip open the closet door. Karen was cowering inside.

“There you are, hiney,” cooed Ellie.

“Oh, no,” cried Karen in mock horror, “not my hiney!”

“Oh, yes,” Ellie said her voice deepening and slowing as she jerked Karen’s slimness close to her own. “It’s my hiney, now.”

Her muscular hands slid along Karen’s body until she came to the desired body part which she grasped roughly.

“My hiney,” she muttered against Karen’s lips and Karen felt a strong lick of heated desire burn across her. Eagerly she sought Ellie’s lips and tongue, her hands tangling themselves in Ellie’s platinum, sweat-dampened hair.

Clothes magically came unfastened then and they fell back across the bed, Karen’s mouth traveling along Ellie’s strong thigh.

They were so involved in their lovemaking they didn’t hear Jean pull up in her car or hear the front door handle jiggle as she tried it. Soft moans prevented either of them hearing her gentle call.

Outside, a perplexed Jean stood on the front porch, nervously patting her gray hair back into its schoolmarm bun.

Turning to look at the yard, she double-checked to make sure her first impressions were right. Yes, tools were still scattered about the grass and two vehicles were parked in the driveway

— Karen’s ragged Subaru and a small, green pick-up truck with Helios Landscaping written on the side panel.

She knocked once more, then left the porch to walk around to the back.

Gingerly, she stepped onto the new gravel walkway, admiring the changes to Karen’s yard, and followed it.

Just as she was passing the half open bedroom window, however, she thought she discerned voices. She paused and looked around, then waited, ears perked for any sound. She heard it again, this time a strange, strangled sound which seemed to be coming from the bedroom.

Anxiously, she approached and, standing on tiptoe, got a glimpse of the entire room. The sight she saw made her land on her heels so hard her teeth clicked together painfully.

Warily, disbelieving, she raised onto her toes again and peered through the opening in the sheer curtains, something a good southern girl would never have done in a million years.

Unfortunately, the scene was still the same, although now the bodies had moved closer together.

Her secret love, her dearest friend Karen, was naked with another woman, both of them on top of the rust-colored bedspread. Karen’s slim body was flushed and rosy, a smile of satiated contentment on her lips.

The other woman, smaller and more solidly built, was also naked, with a mass of long, blond hair that cascaded along her back as Karen unbound it. Karen bent to lay a kiss reverently on the slope of the woman’s pert, uplifted breast.

Jean could watch no more. Tears rose and blurred her vision. Panting with pain, she leaned against the clapboard wall beneath the window.

After a moment more, when she was still unable to compose herself, she fled to her car and, with shaking hands, drove slowly away along route 24 toward town.

Many miles later, just as she reached the outskirts of the small, sleepy Bible-belt town she called home, an evil smile of revenge began to curl her lips.

Passage Twenty-Two

Visceral reaction
The unwitting voyeur watches
Lips and bodies passion blend

Visceral pull
Fragile flesh of neck and wrist
Pulse and pause, move as one
Visceral ache
High emotion shapes the world
Love bleeds life into cosmos

Passage Twenty-Three

The marigold scent lingers
I press hands to my face,
inhale the sweet bitterness
mourn the fact that you must go

How shall I speed the passage
of this hard time apart?
How will I slow the dancing;
desire's heart calling for you?

You come to me late at night
Marigold scent wraps a caress,
soothes in the comfort of love,
shrinking the chasm of time

Passage Twenty-Four

Hunger for the moon
drew me
into the peacefulness
of a deserted nighttime world.

Head back in wonder, I worshipped.
Luminous against a textured night
delineated by curve, the moon.

one perfect Goddess breast
waiting to suckle
a nation of hungry women.

I thought of hungry eyes
and how we put them away.
only brought out at mirrortime
as we ask ourselves why.

As unexpected
as the gift of moon
in a clouded sky,
eyes that dance, nourish
just as effectively
as that luscious curve of moon

Passage Twenty-Five

So, mourning
the pain is
talking to you
hearing you deny
all that we've been

Looking at you
at all the places
I've kissed slow
hurts with farewell

God took you
and holds you
tighter than I
ever could

So, mourning
I turn away
sight so blurred
my step is slow

I nurture
raw wounds
and wait
for love renewed

Passage Twenty-Six

After the glow
leaving your side
is opening a door
onto frigid wilderness
Alaska in winter

Pulled from your warmth
and sly scent of earth,
I draw shivering into myself
a baby girl --just after birth

Memory saves me
as I am warmed, reliving
those moments of hot ecstasy,
amid that aching, tender love

Passage Twenty-Seven

I draw currents,
undertones of movement,
a fleeting caress
otherworld dweller
It's the People of the Sidhe
People of the Sidhe

I draw currents,
undertones of meaning
The fleeting images,
ideas of others,
I can never hope to grasp
Never hope to grasp

I draw currents
Looking through a window,
the escaping waves of
ocean swell beckon
Yet I cannot seem to swim
Cannot seem to swim

Passage Twenty-Eight

Look at them,
vibrant girls
Long legs, sly eyes
mouths open with promises yet to come,
easily bussing as hands smooth curves

Molotov cocktails are still
years in the future
and words that hurt like
jagged bricks through windows fly
haven't penetrated this circle

Youthblisskiss

Personal safety wears a fickle face
and hidden love still has a chance
Tolerance is just a too-big word
on tomorrow's vocabulary test
Blood and fire flirt with life and death

Passage Twenty-Nine

I FINGER CLOTHING, from a shuttered closet, as my mind meanders far away. I'm thinking of life after death and where Catherine wanders now. Doves coo outside a lace-draped casement.

I lie cooing with easy passion. Strong hands strum ecstasy from my form. Sleek hair is soft as feathers under my fingers as I clutch Cat's head to my heaving breast.

The fragrance of patchouli, the ghost of Catherine today, lingers to scent heavy man-clothes. Shirts pressed to my cheeks dry the tears and my nostrils swell, trying to recapture the ecstasy from the essence that was Catherine.

Passage Thirty

I STUDIED MY partner's wide array of daily pills, divided by dosage into a neat, organized tray, and pondered how easy it would be to kill her.

Change one set of pills, miss only a few doses, that's all it would take to wipe the slate clean, to remove her from my life.

It wasn't as if Frannie served any useful purpose, after all. She couldn't work a regular job, or clean house. She didn't cook either, and our once rampant love life had ceased to exist several years ago when she began calling the close contact painful.

Yes, one pill would do it. Blue, white, red, orange; maybe just one extra muscle relaxant today. My hand hovered over the tray, a hummingbird wrought with indecision.

I remembered how it had been in the beginning. Frances had been tiny then, far from the bloated creature she was today. We'd been loving then, intimate, able to talk and laugh together. Now Frannie slumped across from me each morning, eyes glued to the television with avid interest. She couldn't seem to get enough television these days. Only the sound of her harsh breathing and the occasional slap of her tongue as it clamped to the roof of her mouth punctured the low drone of morning programming.

Some days I believed I might go crazy.

My hand darted away, a hummingbird startled into flight. I reached across the table and switched on the small television. It was almost time for her to awaken.

I still loved Frannie though, and it was something that couldn't be helped. Though tired, lonely, and needy, I would carry on because it was the only way left for me to share in her life.

Sighing, I stood, lifting myself with arms pillared against the table. Reluctantly, I traversed the well-worn path to the bedroom. Moving without thought, I opened the bedroom blinds and circled the high bed to snare the wheelchair from its corner.

"Time to wake up, love," I called cheerfully as I approached the bed.

Frannie was awake. Lately she'd been awakening earlier and this disturbed me. I didn't like coming in and finding my dearest love waiting patiently with open eyes, stoic and still.

"How's the sweetums today?" I said as I straightened the many tubes that kept Frances alive. "Did you sleep well?"

"I slept fair," I continued when Fran made no sound in answer. "Can't quite figure how to attach that rain gutter over the deck though, and you know how I tend to worry, even on into my sleep time."

I continued talking the entire time I changed Fran's diaper and dressed her. I told her about the call I'd received from our old friend, Alan, who lived in Florida, about the paperboy throwing the newspaper into the cellar stairwell and how four days' worth of papers had piled up before I realized it. Also about the new ping sound the washing machine had developed.

Carefully, falling silent to concentrate, I unhooked Frances from the bedroom respirator, quickly moved her to the chair and fastened on the hoses of the portable model. Though I'd been

trained extensively, this had always been the trickiest aspect of her care, the small terror of each morning.

Having ensconced Frances in the wheelchair, I whistled a short sad tune as I wheeled her into the kitchen. My hand trembled over the tray of pills as I moved it beside Fran's plate of lukewarm breakfast. Suppose I dropped the tray on the floor and mistakenly handed Frances a different set of pills on the way up. Who would notice? Who would care? Would I be held accountable?

I looked at her and saw the side of Fran's mouth lift in what had to be a smile. Her eyes were fastened to the television. She did so enjoy TV these days.

I picked up the spoon and moved closer to feed my dearest love, the woman I'd committed to so many years ago.

I loved her to distraction. It was something that couldn't be helped.

Passage Thirty-One

Loneliness seeps through
saturating a living sponge
grown of flesh and blood

Feelings too strong
to disperse or assimilate,
by a simple press of flesh

There's a craving
for a caring someone
to hold and hold,
building an aura
of complex intimacy
Caress and swell

Years race by like sunsets
Later, too late
Dark clouds ever threaten,
shadowing youth and health

and love

Too soon night will fall.

Passage Thirty-Two

You left a shape along the lawn
I saw it when you rolled over
Exactly like a clay impression
you molded a form in the clover

They say Jesus died for those like us,
the bad and evil people,
who smoke, and drink, and cuss
God, what a fuss!

Maybe I traveled a bit too far,
grabbed too much too quick
Like the tar-baby, made of tar,
I wanted to be a star
Yet once in a blue moon,
isn't really blue
if all my blue moons are
spent alone with you
I get lonely too

So when you're lying in the grass,
dreaming your sweet lover dreams,
remember me, the lonely one,
not as tough-skinned as it seems

Passage Thirty-Three

Strolling outside
I hear the church bells sing
and I'm filled with
a longing unfamiliar

This life alone
is new for me
Friends gone
lovers faded
all's left is me....
and who will that be?

The who that used to be
or a new manifestation
better than she used to be....

About the Author

Nat Burns is a novelist with Bella Books and Regal Crest, a book editor and a journalist. She is also, most recently, a Goldie Award finalist and winner of the 2011 Alice B. Lavender Certificate. www.natburns.com

Yellow Rose Titles You Might Enjoy

Amazonia

by Sky Croft

What happens when you finally find the woman of your dreams, but your twin sister despises her?

Amazonian twin sisters Shale and Kale are as different as night from day, but they have an unbreakable bond—a bond that is tested to its limit when their tribe is brutally slaughtered by an unknown assailant.

Seeking revenge, redemption, and a new place to call home, the twin warriors travel to another tribe, where they find an ally in Blake, an amazon princess. Shale and Blake form an instant connection, much to Kale's obvious unease.

As Shale strives to make friends and fit into their new tribe, a matter made all the more difficult by jealous rivals, power struggles, and her forthright twin, she must also let down her guard to Blake and surrender her heart, a most unnatural task for a warrior.

When the deadly assailant suddenly reappears, not only is the blossoming love between Shale and Blake threatened, but the lives of the entire tribe. Will these warring amazons find common ground and ultimately unite? Or will the entire amazon nation fall?

It's Elementary

by Jennifer Jackson

Tolerance and acceptance are growing in society, but don't tell that to a parent of a school-aged child. Teachers are supposed to be straight, wholesome, and good examples for the children they teach. This is why one vague rumor about a slightly effeminate teacher at Baxter Elementary resulted in a mob of angry parents demanding his removal. Victoria was a first hand witness to the carnage, which is why she vowed to never let her personal life mingle with her professional life. It was a good plan. That is until a most-certainly-not-her-type, absolutely adorable, first-year teacher got under her skin. And, when a confused and desperate parent targets her protégé, Victoria must decide which is more important: her career or love.

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