

POEMS FOR
THE
REVOLUTION
OF LOVE

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CORAL CARTER
TERRY FARRELL

**Poems
for the
Revolution
of Love**

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Created for 'Poems for the Revolution of Love' at Fringe Gallery

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You

you
take me off the grid
you
array me as photovoltaic
you
call me to the wild
you
earth me again

as I
stumble on a tree root
catch the full moon
smiling ripple-faced upon water
trees bend to watch
the animal night caws

you
breathe in and out
the wind-thermals of night
bathe in moon's glow
on sand islet
your hot spring
singing

you
with no more than socks
when I could no longer stand
you
who took me
home

Terry

hollow reed

Perhaps it was the withering nature
of the wind, rain and drying through the seasons
or perhaps it was the company of the dark earth
and its possessive love
perhaps it was just old man time
hypnotizing his patients
sending them out to see and do what was not real,
to go about, hands in pockets, praying for a cure
perhaps it was not the effects of this lifetime at all
but a simple act of nature, like
the breakdown of fibers to sugar-crystal to simple molecules
the slow filtering and sieving of the unnecessary over eons
or as the moth, knowing the flame, sheds its wings to light
or, as the atheist, for no reason whatsoever
each that I ask answers differently
out in the fields of straw
a reed is hollowed
plays the melodic sound
pierces the hearts of those
who hear its poem

Terry

Women of Barcelona

Women of Barcelona
the wind slows in the streets
to catch you as you walk by
raindrops race from clouds
to be the first to kiss your golden cheeks
all around I notice, day or night,
the sun, stars, moon
and the wide sky
come out beckoning for your gaze
as I pass by you
on the Ramblas

Terry

Falling

answering the call
the hero went

answering the call
the hero fought

answering the call
the hero was defeated

answering the call
the hero died

along a foreshore
the singular grain of sand
caressed by an entire ocean

lessons learnt
from falling

Terry

The elder

The bearded elder sits before the fire
at once full of mischief, silence and roundness
rings the cymbals
beckons the well open
I listen as the sound
rings outward, occupying the invisible
now fading into the silent distance

A circle of men sitting
observed by the granite outcrop
Trees and leaves bend to listen
their arms hang like so many
incomplete structures
empty-handed

A black sky menaces
chases shadows across the earth
spills its thunder as applause
The ground around us
cracks and pops anticipating the rain
I feel its approach on my skin

I remember other times
life was this simple
days when I heard such words
as sounds with my whole body
Times before walls
and weaponry

The rain falls now
on us quietly
perhaps equally
perhaps indifferently
Either way it stays
only long enough
to dampen our clothes a little

A circle of men
perfumed by rain
all of us
split open like ripe almonds
completely incomplete
again

The cymbals chime
us back from the distance
again through the ages
The well closes
He smiles

Terry

The grey stone

Sometimes the grey stone
hangs heavy
around my neck
diverting my gaze
into the earth
and the name written on its face
reminds me of my impending end

Terry

Why does a man live in a tree?

A man lived in a tree
for two years
I heard it on the news

Why does a man
live in a tree
for two years?

The newsreader said
the government had taken back his land
and he wouldn't leave

so he moved into the tree
on his land
and stayed there for two years

until the government
changed its mind
and gave him his land back

So that's the news
of why a man
lives in a tree for two years

but I wasn't there.

Terry

What if

What if
they gathered at the shore
in their thousands
having come from far and wide
the doctors, the lawyers
the politicians, the clergy
the poets and writers
the actors and comedians
the housewives, the labourers, the musicians

you name them
they gathered
then each had their turn to talk
and one by one they admitted
just what they had always secretly longed to be

then among themselves they agreed
agreed to swap their roles
and so an accountant became a clown
and a clown became a fire chief
and so on
it unraveled until each person was done
and assigned their new role

then they disbanded
agreeing to meet again
a year hence
to discuss their experiences
perhaps to swap again

What would become of a world where
Christians became Muslims
dressmakers became journalists
bricklayers became healers?
Did the trains run on time
did the leaky tap get fixed
were lunches ever made
or dinners served hot?

I suppose we will never know.

Terry

Cupid

I have battled the love fairy before
all arrows
baby fat
tiny pink wings
beating at the rate of a racing heart
enveloped in clouds of cumulus
halo of red hearts
and showered in glitter.
You are in my sights.
I am well-armed
with warheads of bitterness and spite.
One breast — I am built for battle
I can march for days on water
and little else.
My leather battle-dress beats
against my thighs
as hard as trodden earth.
My dogs bay for babies' blood.
My sword hungry for baby flesh.
Love! Love! Love!
I don't want anything to do with love.
Cupid you fat little pest
I am drawing a bead on you.

Coral

and i'm in my bed

and i'm in my bed
there are borders
and boundaries between us
while darkness chews on
the face of the moon
and i'm in my bed
my skin just falls away
as it does every night
while i'm sleeping
and i'm in my bed

the ceiling fan dries my eyes
i wonder if i'll go blind
like my mother and aunt
will my spine crumble too?
and i'm in my bed
but tonight is not a night for sleeping
besides it is morning anyway
someone is cooking pasta
in this city right now
because it's saturday
the friday fast is over
and i'm in my bed
i lie in it all the time, i made it
thorns from the roses
scratched my arms and hands
but i tell you these scratches
are from when
i killed the cat
and you believe me
and i'm in my bed
but this night
even though it is morning
was never meant for sleeping
i've let the time drip away
vein blood blue and viscous
and i'm in my bed
and it was spelled
in capitals so loud
i reached for earplugs
searched for a pen
found a knife
carved a one word poem in my flesh

and i'm in my bed
and i'm in my bed
and i'm in my bed...

Coral

he told me

he told me
his ache was rib caged and pacing
he never found flame — only ash
his pen was inked with dust
something is wrong
something had gone wrong
something was never wrong before
he told me
ache caged
flame ash
pen dust
wrong
wrong
wrong
never wrong
never wrong
never wrong
before
he told me

Coral

I get it

and yeah I get it when you say you are going to the desert
and yeah I get it when you say you will never write again
and I get it when you are in your monk's hole
adding another day to your slow suicide
and yeah I get it you are hurt and can hurt
I get it that you are vulnerable and vain
and yeah I get it is too late for me
too early for you
and when bitterness forks my tongue
I wish you to fall for someone too young
but I get it doesn't work like that for men
I get most things
except what I want
I get it all

Coral

cheap

it's been
daytime television
washing machine beep
underfoot stair creak
tiled floor cold
for me

but now
at four
friday arvo
knock off
street roars
hoons are out
claudia
& candice
tonight's
attraction
at the inland city
hotel
two dollars
to drop
their tits out
cheap

Coral

Not Intended to Hurt

Another Friday arvo
the sun strikes four.
Small birds
make sharp sounds
as they kill.
I sit in soft light
my back aches
my front aches
tea is beside me.
Traffic streams

not bubble/gurgle
but rain-sodden thunder.
Trucks and utes
and buses and bikes
and vans and cars
and twin cabs
and and and...
An orange-headed ant
bites my toe
and I let it.
I ask,
Why are you biting me?
It stops.
As the sun falls behind a tree
hits the glass table
shatters light into my eye
sprays warm on my face
twenty-eights yell
farewell
across a faded sky,
I talk to myself.
I am loving hating you, I say.
I want to drive us both
over the cliff
off a bridge
into a life-taking tree.
How would you like that?
I smile.
It is hard
to determine
a response.
No one is here.
No one is there.
No one is anywhere.

Coral

outside the window II

At 38,000 feet
Felicitiy's plump
jellybean
pink lips
glisten.
Her skin is
stroke-me-smooth
cream'n'pale,
punctured once
beneath her
bottom lip.
Grey wolf eyes
stare into mine.
Can I help you with anything?
Outside the window
the sky is
slapbang
in-your-face
blue.
Clouds
dazzle whiter
than
washing-powder
advertisments.
February ends.
One of us
is in trouble.
I tell it
the only way
I know.
Face autumn with the
legions of love
at your shoulder.

Coral

Schoolyard ghosts

When the lollies are passed around
they're never the ones I like.
They're always sucrose-hit fake-colour
convenience store cheapies.

I like
deep chocolate
dense fudge
soft glucose
slow savour.

Not available
on just any corner. You
unwrap *one*
let me scent it

I reach out
but you snatch it back and hide it.

When I protest you say
Don't be so sensitive.
See? It's not even real.

The walls echo the laughs
of the schoolyard ghosts
trapped in the concrete
science blocks

of my head
and yours

Janet

orbit

I love you but I don't want to see you, comet eyes
shattered to blood, moon brain
in captured orbit, sun skin
and planet spirit
all pilled and pissed away

Janet

The right metaphor

Fly free, I said. *I*
wanted to fly.

On my back, wings
have grown: their bones
 from structures of thought, their sinews
 from lines of ideas, their muscles
 from patterns of rhythm, their layered feathers
 from notes and rests

Here on the ground
 with a child, a lover, a friend,
 a collective, a tribe,
 I hold, I am held

but the thing that calls me is away, away,
 out there, up high

I wear two garments:
one of coloured stripes
 for talk, community, we,
 our food, our bodies earthed,
 the joy of your smile;
one of black lace
 for silence, autonomy, I
 my black wings in the black sky
 the joy of the mind

I stand in the highest place I can find
and flap my wings, but—
 to abandon my child?
 To leave my friend lonely?
 To never again sit by the fire
 of your skin?

I curl on the ground,
 wings limp,
 weeping.
Love is a cage! I say. It's a chain!

'I am on a long leash,'
says a married
poet. A *leash*?
 Heel! Quiet! Down!
 Good dog. Wag your tail.
 Here's a treat. Now curl up
and dream
of hunting.

In *my* dreams, I can use
the wings. I hang
 from my wings, alone
 in my skull and ribcage, flying
 where I please...

but
I need the hand
 reaching for mine,
 the other voices,
 your shining skin.

So
how can I fly?
Family
 is a cage, flesh
 is a chain, love
 is a leash!

I can't resolve it! I can't, I can't!
 I can't see anything but blackness and turmoil.
I go into the streets, walk here, walk there.
 The passers-by
 do not notice me.

I go into my house. I sit
 with open hands.

Something comes in and touches me,
 flesh and wings,
flies away.

The clouds are blurred across the wet-paint sky.
My garden is a flowering field of weeds.
I am pacing and crouching,
 ranting and weeping,
 making fists and upturned palms.

On the third day, the voice
 in the sky,
 in my head,
whispers,

It's not a cage!
It's not a chain!
A leash is the wrong metaphor!
The right metaphor
is a long elastic cord
 between lovers,
 between friends,
 between parent and child,
between the I
 and the smile—
a long elastic cord!

Fly free, I said. *I*
wanted to fly. I thought
 I needed to cut
 all the cords to get
 enough distance

but if the cord is sufficiently long and elastic
I can fly right out to space,
 to Mars,
Mars stark and beautiful.

Mars is probably far enough.

If love is a cage
 plan your escape

If love is a chain
 find your boltcutters
If love is a leash
 bite hard

But if love is a long elastic cord
 and we keep it supple,
 flex it,
 trust it,
we can fly free—
 free, each of us,
 separate yet connected

and our flying will be truly free,
 a flight without fear—
because if love is a long elastic cord
 there's always
 a way home.

Janet

The lyrics

(for two voices)

It's just a thing.
Just a thing.
We did the research.
We measured it.
Don't bother to write, to sing.
It's just a thing.

But
 when we held each other
 naked to the waist
 the skin over our hearts
 pressed close—
That's just pheromones,
chemicals,
your

oxytocin
receptors
firing.
We did the research.
We measured it.
It's just a thing.

But
when we held each other
naked to the waist
the skin over our hearts
pressed close—

Chemical messages,
firing of neurons.
We did the research.
We measured it.
It's just a thing.

One's as good as another
when you need release.
They're all the same—
a nuisance, really,
disruptive to your work,
your contribution to the economy.
Go out with your friends,
spend your money.
You'll be fine.
You'll function smoothly.
You'll be able to play.
It's just a thing.
Just chemicals, just neurons.
Don't bother to write, to sing.
If it's really a problem
you can take this pill.

But when we held each other
naked to the waist
the skin over our hearts

pressed close
I felt...

That skin
is a sacrament. That body—

a sacrament.
Did I desecrate it
with my grabbing hands,
 the hands of a thing,
my animal lust,
 the lust of a thing
that's been told
 all its life
that it's just a thing?

Did I desecrate,
 or was that
 worship?
I don't know.

But my neurons played
a transcendent music
and even if that
was just a thing

I will give it the lyrics
it deserves.

Janet

Virid

Among the gleaming chemical blades
 of the plastic lawn
hundreds of grass-green stems
 rise up

Janet

precious

if I give up, things will come right, so everyone says
if I tell you I have given up on you
if your response to that is to rush joyfully into the distance
if I turn my head to hide my tears
if I walk away

if I am quiet
if I do not speak
if I walk for long enough

§

if it doesn't work
if I stop walking and find I am truly alone

if I relinquish my ego to the heavens, but the heavens give it back
if this happens again, and again
if the heavens have decided I need my ego in order to do my work

if I ask, 'What is the method?'
if I suppose that 'What is the method?' is the wrong question
if I know that 'Where is the Way?' is a better question
if I think of Leonard Cohen who tried going up the mountain but
came down again
if I suppose that the answer is among the houses, not up the
mountain
if I look among the houses for a teacher of the Way who can help
me

§

if it doesn't work
if the teacher has gone ahead of me to the place at the end of her
path
if I find myself floundering in her dusty, meandery footsteps
if she left me only one book and it doesn't contain the answer

§

if it turns out that this is the Way and I'm already on it, ego and all
if this is the Way perhaps I'm wearing the wrong clothes
if I had known the Way would be this hot and dusty would I have
taken it?

if I know myself at all: no doubt I would have

if the Way leads me to a thousand different houses
if in each house I find a little piece of the puzzle
if the people in each of the houses embrace me
if once I have found the piece, I must walk on to another house

if some of the people from the houses follow behind me
if it seems I have become a teacher, incomplete as I am
if letting people call me a teacher is a shameful piece of egotism

if I am always first a student

§

if only all the pieces were in one house, I could sit down and get
comfy

if I found them all, I could *build* that house and invite everyone
over for a puzzle night

if I build the house anyway, everyone can *bring* their pieces!
if I'm not strong enough to build a house, I can build just one little
room

if everyone comes and adds to it, it may be as lovely and surprising
as the house of Wikipedia

if there are still pieces missing we can give up searching and just
make them ourselves

if there are pieces missing we can still enjoy the puzzle

§

if in the collective house I will not have a room of my own
if I continue to be afraid that in the collective house I will not have
a room of my own, will I ever actually build it?

§

if the way I arrange my room makes most visitors uncomfortable
if I like my room the way it is
if nobody else in the house has a room like mine

if the puzzle has an enormous hole in it

if I end up being the janitor and doing all the cleaning
if I stop doing the cleaning nobody does it and the house gets in a
muddle

if I tell myself the muddle doesn't matter to anyone but me
if I force myself to leave it someone will eventually do it

if I get sick of the muddle and noise and go back to the road, the
search

if I find a piece of the puzzle and come back to the house for a
while

if the road, and the house, are both, together, the Way

§

if you would walk beside me it might be nicer
if you would walk beside me, each of us might be less lonely
if you've got some of the puzzle pieces, even better
if you'd give me your pieces there might not be such a hole in it

§

if you *are* walking beside me, but my ego is blocking my senses
if you're talking to me now and I'm too deaf to hear you
if you're looking at me, but I'm too blind
if you're holding out the pieces and I don't take them
if you want to swap them for something even more precious that I
am holding on to

Janet



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