

# love notes and other insolence



poems by jon l. adams



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# love notes and other insolence

This is my third chapbook of poetry and prose. The first was titled “*Heaping Abuse On The Master*” (December 2004) and it presented poems I wrote from the late nineteen-seventies until June 2004.

The second was titled “*Trips to a Far Cafe.*” Most of the work in that book was done after I left my former home in Long Beach, California while awaiting the official stamp on my long-sought divorce petition. I wrote them in a Quonset hut on a ranch near Somis, California.

This third book includes poems written after I moved to Ohio in October 2005.

Poetry is a cataloging of personal images, thought and reflections upon both. The bulk of these poems are on the subject of love and its affectations.

A note about reading poetry: Close the door, turn off the music and the TV, chase everyone away, and read poems aloud to your own ears, sounding each word and syllable. Allow the words to fill the room and to ring in your ears, particularly if they stir a personal thought or feeling in you. If that doesn't happen, get a glass of wine or beer and just simply enjoy.

Dedicated to Horace -

*Carpe diem quam minimum credula postero* – “seize the day and place no trust in tomorrow”

(From *Odes* 1.11)

## A POEM'S POWER

A poem is senses  
distilled to few words.

It is vision:  
A view of the willow,  
haunting in fog,  
a mountain in purple cloak,  
behind a blue ridge,  
Katydid skipping  
across mildewed ponds.

It is smell:  
Pesto sauce, garlic bread,  
sizzling plate of scampi,  
open boxes of chocolates,  
the scent of her hair.

It is feel and touch:  
The skin of a baby,  
a soft, plush blanket,  
cold metal bracelet,  
fingertips as they rub  
his picture glass.

It is sound:  
Hoofbeats on the meadow,  
tip-tap of the cat's claws  
on hard stone tiles,  
a plaintive siren,  
broken bowl,  
a hushed sob.

It is taste:

Berries in ice cream,  
smothered in hot fudge,  
vinegar on salad leaves,  
tart pickle relish  
in the macaroni dish.

It is sadness:

The puppy in the pound,  
wanting your touch,  
a man with a hand-sketched sign,  
the widow at the window, waiting,  
a broken dream.

It is joy:

A love requitted,  
the long-awaited letter.  
a first rosebud opens!  
You are home again!

A poem is god's way  
of singing to the heart,  
the poet's way  
to learn the music.

(2007)

## CAREFUL

Careful not to touch  
a heart too firmly,  
too tenderly,  
that it welds to mine,  
to bleed and tear  
comes time to go.

Careful not to say  
those words again,  
lest I hurt someone  
or hurt myself again  
when it's time to go.

Better to be the friend  
who will always know  
the time to stop  
the time to go.

Better to be remembered  
for not inflicting wounds,  
for not inciting love.

(2007)

## CRYSTAL

Among the broken pipes  
That spewed my life, my marriage,  
A tiny crystal fell.

I lifted it, examined it,  
The fog of circumstance  
Denied identity.

But when the storm had passed,  
In the clear light of morning,  
I saw that it was me!

(2005)

## HER EYES

She gripped a stem  
of Chardonnay,  
as if it was  
an offered rose,  
a golden petaled  
natural wonder.

Through the crystal  
I coveted her face,  
her eyes that struck me,  
reflecting diadems  
floating on undisturbed  
seas of cream.

I said:  
“Were you my woman,  
I would spend my life  
trying to write a poem  
to describe your  
perfect eyes.”

She said:

“Relax.  
You’ve done it.”

(2007)

## HALCYONS

In those days  
he walked afar  
and took his tea  
with gentle others.

His costume  
was a pipe, a cap,  
a walking stick,  
spent leather boots.

He spent those days  
on salted beaches,  
where hungry friends  
invoked his tales.

That summer came  
when love ensued  
and light erupted  
on his world.

But came the day  
when it was done  
and other flames  
burned love away.

Alas, in time,  
the photographs  
and poetry  
are all that live.

(2005)

## LOVE POEM NUMBER NINE

If I were a millionaire,  
I'd pour all my resources,  
my body and my heart,  
my intellect and grace,  
my cunning and my poetry,  
into gaining your love.

If I were beside you now,  
I'd not allow my eyes  
to leave yours,  
my ears to shut away your voice,  
my touch to leave your warmth,  
my lungs to leave your breath unbreathed.

I'd do it all in vain  
I know, because you'd never feel  
the pull my chest endures,  
the heat my flesh knows,  
the pleasant light  
my eyes perceive in yours.

I'd do all anyway,  
just so that you know  
what you do to me.

(2007)

## MELANCHOLIA

It is an avenue  
long and once traveled,  
a boulevard, a street,  
a rutted track  
of memories  
of broken dreams  
of higher expectations  
of promise unfulfilled,  
the way I came.

Now there are only  
old mirrors and walls,  
this stone cold heart  
and crumpled maps,  
letters to myself  
no one will ever read  
or understand,  
pictures in a box,  
empty gestures.

(2006)

## ONE

A Berkeley restaurant,  
and she walked in  
wearing knees-out jeans,  
hefting her book stack  
like a quiet baby.

Before the waiter came  
She turned six pages,  
Pulled out her phone  
And made a call.

“Jake,” she said.  
“I’m pissing you off,  
I know, but it’s over.”  
And made another,

“Darren,” she said.  
“I broke up with him.”  
Another page and then –  
The waiter arrived.

(2007)

## RAPID EYE MOVEMENTS

Dark man on a street,  
A silver half moon,  
Black goslings overhead  
On a frozen, bald night.

Streaming bats against brick,  
Squeaky stair step,  
A door slips open,  
In an otherwise silent house.

Footfalls on the path,  
Falling broken twig,  
A lone dog's howl,  
Sirens in the fog.

A shuffle of cloth,  
The press of a warm pillow,  
A muted groan,  
Then I awaken.

(2007)

## REMNANTS

In my library  
I find notes,  
bookmarks,  
scribbled margins.

In the closet,  
that shirt  
she bought me.

The kitchen -  
a serving bowl,  
the ladle  
she brought home.

I would throw  
them all away,  
but better  
to forget the who  
than feel the guilt.

(2007)

## SPLINTERS

Glittered concrete. A sun-baked sidewalk  
Frozen photographs. Shattered glass and broken dreams  
Memories of wonderment became death  
And nobody even gave a shit.

When the party broke its euphoric dance  
The conspirators walked out the door  
And cast their glasses on the ground  
And I was left to sweep it.

(2005)

## TO AN IMAGINARY PHOTOGRAPH

You float here  
a permanence unfettered  
by closed eyes.

Your image is a picture  
always ready to appear  
in my mind's eye.

You maintain a presence  
without effort,  
without a frame,

without a warning  
shouted out.  
Beautiful!

I see you here  
Yet cannot grasp you.  
Tempting!

I have sworn,  
"No more!"  
Yet you linger.

I want to hold you  
long and carefully,  
but have not the will.

I want to feel your breath,  
your hand-rough hair,  
your trembling finger,

yet I fear you,  
Beauty; the consequences  
of those acts

would frame me  
in your glass,  
trap me there

to linger for  
your eye, your touch,  
forevermore.

(2008)

## SPIRIT IN ME

Spirit be strong in me.  
Awaken in me your strength,  
Your infinite purpose.

Be with me in every darkness.  
Help my eyes to see horizons,  
My heart to feel forgiveness.

Be with me in every encounter.  
Help my limbs to suffer blows,  
My hands to grasp my tools.

Be with me in every heartbreak.  
Help my love to overcome,  
My patience to abide beside me.

Spirit be strong in me.  
Help me achieve knowledge,  
My mind to understand what I can.

Spirit be in me,  
With every step I take,  
Every day I wake.

(2006)

Note: This poem is spoken by a protagonist in my long-novel-in-progress, *The Annals of the Kings*.

## THE LOCKET

From a drawer,  
Years in lost repose,  
I found her locket.

I had given it to Mother.  
She had broken off  
The single jewel.

“I’ll fix it, Mom,”  
I sd and took it home.

That promise broken,  
In the drawer and  
Many years hence:

I took it to a jeweler.  
“Fix it, please, “I sd.  
And when I took it to her,

“Oh, this is nice,” she sd.  
“I’ve always wanted one!”

Would that I could  
Fix her memories,  
But new is better.

(2007)

## CHASE, UNREALIZED

Now that scent.  
Again the eyes  
And I am undone  
By just the way she steps  
Out of the car.

Ah! The thought  
Of her stepping out  
With me forever!

Yet, this is no chase.  
I am no wolf after meals,  
No runner chasing prizes.

She stares at me  
As if wondering when  
I will make my lunge.

I glance back at her,  
Wondering what  
That move will cost.

(2005)

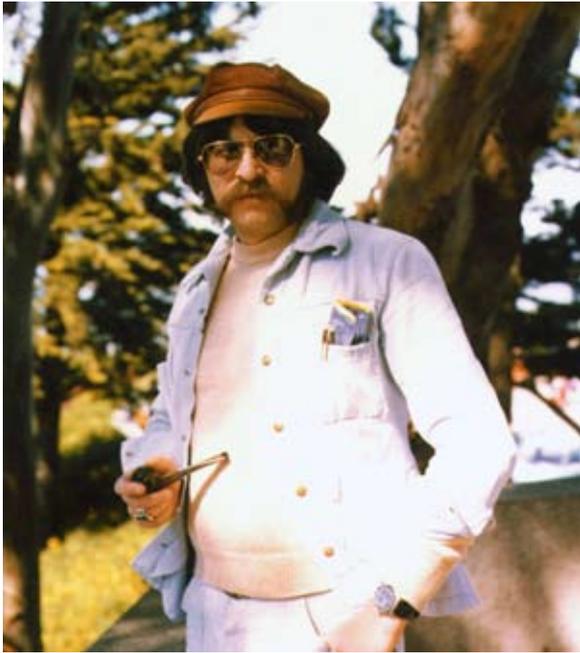
## WETTED STONES

Gentle sprinkled walk  
along the river's dry and  
whitewashed limestone bed –  
scattered circles on the pools  
teases on the thirsty land.

Thunder in the distance!  
Storm shadows slip away.  
Promise unfilled, alas,  
the east grows dark.  
The wind dies without rain.

Walking home I find them!  
Wetted stones along the road!

(2007)



Circa 19something. Notice the cap.

## BOREDOM'S PAUSE

When creating stops  
depression starts.  
Boredom's pause  
Awaits these parts.

Wresting satisfaction  
from boredom, in a sense,  
is like wringing kindness  
from insolence.

Where is the match  
to flame my fire?  
Where is the hunger  
To whet a desire?

There rests a canvas,  
primed, unfinished.  
There is work to do,  
That's undiminished!

Maybe a poem?  
Yet what is to write?  
I need a catharsis  
to fashion my light!

(2007)

## AUGURIES AND DONATA (2006)

Dona had a song  
she sang when sorrow came.  
One night her voice cracked  
As a glass upon the tiles.  
I said, Is something wrong?  
She smiled and went on singing.

Dona stood along a cliff.  
We looked over water  
at an isle called Cominos.  
You'll go that way some day,  
she said and a seagull  
landed on my head.

We drank by fishing boats  
to watch a brilliant sunset.  
The waiter spilled my glass  
on her yellow cotton dress.  
She said, I'll never wear  
this one again.

Washed on a pebbled beach  
we found two fish.  
Their fins entangled  
in a cold sea's death embrace  
They're lovers, she said,  
and they had no choice.

I watched her island  
From the leaving ferry.  
A dark and heavy cloud  
flew over it and stopped,  
as if a curtain had been drawn  
and the play was over.

## CHINESE VASE

It came to the marriage,  
a gift from her friend  
and when it was over  
it came with me.

It lies shattered here,  
a vase no more, but  
a scattering of shards -  
a burst of chipped china.

I carefully packed it  
for both those journeys:  
First to the ranch exile.  
Second to this old house.

It rode in a box in another,  
among my treasured things  
in the cave of a van  
all the way from California

to be knocked down and  
blown to bits by cats.  
Just another memory  
gone to dust.

(2006)

## CARPE DIEM

The night song is over.  
Now echoes fill the room.  
What must proceed  
engages.

I find last night's poem,  
unfinished, letters on scrap,  
wanting, staring  
soundless.

The day is manifest  
and drips with  
opportunity.

I seize it!

(2007)

## DRAFT: A VERSE TO BALANCE

For every light there is a darkness. A white page, a smudge. A word, a counter. There exists dark nature, the opposite of One, an opposition to each state.

Some call it Evil. Some want a devil or a demon, an angel fallen from Grace. Others see it in the polar sense. It becomes the attractions of a magnet or of ions.

I see it as the balance.

It is what creates motion. It is force. It is the propulsion that makes it available to what I create. I take a color and I know the contrasting one. I state a theorem and I know the refutation, whether or not it is true or false.

For every Osiris there is a Set. For every point there is a counterpoint. For every day will come a night.

It is balance.

(2008)

## AMUSING CATS

Amusing cats is difficult  
but a necessary protocol.  
If you don't amuse them,  
they resort to raucous play,  
and the un-amusing owner  
will certainly pay.

A lamp, a vase, the shredded chair,  
a thread-bared rug, a broken plate,  
the shower curtain, holed and slashed,  
a scattering of toilet tissue.

Golf club cover chewed to pieces!  
How did they unplug my printer?  
Where's my other sock, God damn it!  
Who has torn this check in half?

Who's the culprit?  
Now where are they?  
Sleeping stuffed toys -  
next to my feet.  
Amusing me!

(2007)

## COME, SUMMER

Come Summer's  
sweat-wet days of July,  
I live to hear that sound -  
a ball rattle the depth  
of a plastic cup.  
Eyes down, chin up,  
loose grip, tilted hips.  
The game is on.

Come Summer's  
Dog-hot days of August,  
I live to smell the scent -  
fat drips on charcoal,  
smoke feels the chops  
smothered in honeyed sauce,  
and roasting corn.  
Dinner's on.

Come Summer's  
reap-ripe days of September,  
I live to feel night's chill  
harbinger of Autumn.  
I live to see a diamond,  
green nights under lights.  
Another game is on.  
Baseball!

Come, Summer!

(2006)

## CRUCIBLES

Love burns  
holes in my eyes,  
brands me  
a fattened steer,  
stands me  
like a bowler's pin,  
melts me  
like welder's flux,  
shapes me  
to her own design,  
bronzed that way  
as if poured  
from her heart-hot  
crucible.

(2007)

## CRYSTAL

Among the broken pipes  
That spewed my life, my marriage,  
A tiny crystal fell.

I lifted it, examined it,  
The fog of circumstance  
Denied identity.

But when the storm had passed,  
In the clear light of morning,  
I saw that it was me!

(2005)

## DRAFT: A VERSE TO BOOKS

I touch my books.  
Volumes line my room.  
Ancient, old and new,  
they hold some message  
I have yet to hear.

Dusty, worn, but worthy.  
Encased within are legend,  
wisdom, truths and rhyme  
I have yet to read,  
Messages new and dear.

Yesterday, Herodotus.  
Today, Borges.  
Tomorrow, the Universe.

(2007)

## ELEGY TO A DEAD CANDLE

She blew out the flame.  
It's five years now.  
The candle stilled,  
Remained with me, intact,  
But in that forlorn darkness,  
I tried to hold its warmth,  
it's fading light,  
a glimpse, a hope,  
a prayer that she,  
the object of my love  
would give it spark again.

In the darkness of loss  
I endured the pains  
of numbness and that hunger.  
The days became weeks  
and endless months.  
The candle, stilled,  
bereft of flame,  
came to haunt my dreams.

Eventually I put it  
in a box that gathers dust  
and went my way alone.  
But came this day,  
five years hence,  
I took it out and lit  
it up again in celebration,  
so it may burn its very last.

(2007)

## FEEL THE WIND

It shudders and relents.  
The window screen rattles.  
My coat is not enough  
to bend it away.

The scrap of paper  
slips carelessly  
through the grass,  
uncut, bent low.

Somewhere a siren  
waned against  
the sharp wind's  
white noise curtain.

A bold goose  
strains against it.  
The crows grip wire  
awaiting stillness.

I go, its beat against my back  
to the shelter of a tree.  
It follows me here,  
knowing not who I am,  
  
but where I am.

(2007)

## HER FINGERS

She touches everything,  
a long, slim limb,  
that lingers.

I love to watch  
the slowness  
in her fingers.

I tell her,  
“Your careful way,  
feels everything you see.”

“I always will,”  
She says,  
and lays a hand on me.

(2006)

## GRACE

I asked God for grace,  
Two days of silence.  
No threats, demands.  
bills in my mail.  
No sudden shocks  
or sicknesses.

So far,  
God gave me one.  
I can suffer through today!

(2007)

## IN RETROSPECT...

When you left  
this love locked heart  
became a stone.

When you returned  
it cracked and  
beat again for you.

You left the next day  
and I became a vessel  
full of your empty

promises.

Suddenly,  
all these unfinished lines  
are no longer  
pain-writ and waiting  
for clarity.

Suddenly,  
the vessel fills again  
with promise.

(2005)

## LATE FEBRUARY

Spring's sap flows.  
Geese fill the lowing sky.  
I find a crocus, early and wanting.  
The winds of March approach.  
I watch the shoveled heaps subside  
in sinking pools, rust brown grass.  
Somewhere a window opens  
to let in the promise.

(2007)

## LAUREL

The stucco lit her china face near the shop door.  
I paused in mid-step for appraisal's sake.  
She held me with her perfect gaze until she had to go.

We talked and cooked angel hair and took it out back.  
The lawn was soft beneath our four bare feet.  
We laughed and dined in darkness until she had to go.

I sold the house to move away and follow muses.  
I threw a party to say goodbye and everyone came.  
Sometime during the night she stole away. She had to go.

When I'm asleep she comes to me.  
I wake and lilacs scent my room.  
Laurels never last till morning.

(Undated)

## MARBLE HEART

What made this marbled heart  
warm from stone to flesh?

Wide, white eyes, jeweled blue,  
captives in a kohl-dark matrix?

Electric touch from slender fingers,  
that play me like a harpsicord?

The shifting hips, that magic gait,  
the dancer in her model's stroll?

A picture in my mind's eye -  
far too fresh to sketch in paint.

(2007)

## MARCH SONG

Spring's sap flows.  
Geese fill the lowing sky.  
A crocus, early and wanting.  
The winds heel and flag.  
I watch the shoveled heaps subside  
in sinking pools, rust brown grass.  
Somewhere a window opens  
to let in the promise,  
to let out the ache.

(2007)

## MEETING YOU

Your voice I recalled  
the day we talked  
on electric waves,  
something about nothing -  
the meaning was lost.

Then I saw you in a crowded room.

That's her? I thought!  
That's you?

You left the meeting.  
Your haste toward the door  
quickenened me.

My call stood you still.  
We talked. I drank you,  
and I looked for a ring  
on your graceful fingers.

And I had given up all hope!

(2008)

MOREOVER

I wrote a lyric meant to say  
How some of us would live to see  
The coming of the End of Time.

If that were true and here today  
Oh! God forbid it came to be  
Then who'd be here to sing this rhyme?

(2007)

## MORNING DARK

A cat shrieks in anger  
At the sun's first crack  
Somewhere in the unseen  
Morning black.

River's lapping water  
Hides its colorless hue  
Beside my early morning  
Damp mysterious view.

Around me people stir  
In dimly lit abodes  
Behind their silent doors  
To carry this day's loads.

A car alarm bleats like geese.  
My half-drunk coffee chills.  
I wake to a visual hunger  
Only the birthing day fills.

(Undated. Probably 2006)

## PLACES OF INTEREST

They beckon me, these shopworn boots  
to let them feel and kick and kiss  
cobble and stones of ancient places,  
archaic mud and slip on unmapped trails,  
the dreams of old leather and dirt,  
renewing, giving life, infusing spirit;  
they want me again in Carthage and Ghent  
and Smyrna and the coves of Crete,  
the starlit road from Fez to Port Lyautey,  
the monkeyed steps of a mountain Zen temple,  
the timeworn wastes of Cuzco in Peru.

The boots will always want the road beneath them.  
I must whisper promises: Those days will come again!

(2005)

## PORPHYRY

Her hair was porphyry  
Red mass, fine crystals,  
Feldspar and entangled  
Bits of crystalline fire.

My eyes were captured  
When we first met and  
My senses never quit the  
Fire around her face.

When another day arrived  
I wrote her name on my desk  
But in a month or two  
I put a red rock in its place.

(2007)

RELEASED

As Moses struck the rock  
and water flowed forth,

you struck this hard heart  
and love caught its breath.

Your voice, your sigh,  
your penetrating eye -

No branch, no stick of wood  
cleft the curse that chained it.

Should I sail tomorrow  
to the fires of Hades,

your gifted breath will  
blow cool upon my ear.

(2006)

## TO SAINT ANNE

On a sweat-hot day,  
you handed me a Psalm.  
I wanted your body,  
but you measured my soul.

Passions fired in both of us.  
We loved in sin, unrepentant.  
We never mentioned gods  
or saints or angels.

I said I could not stay.  
I told you at the start.  
Our sins have bonded  
you to me, you said!

I've broken all those chains.  
Far horizons called to me.  
When I left you there  
I left you to *your* calling.

I burn joss for you  
as you burn votives for me.  
The flame in us was physical,  
all it could ever be.

(2005)

## SCENTS

Roses. No.  
Something lighter.  
The whiff of Jasmine bushes  
on a thick and humid night.  
A windborne mote  
of lilacs, here then gone.  
I look around for her  
but she's not there.  
The door, the other rooms?  
I walk closer to the women,  
catching scents but not the One.  
Was it a dream, my imagination?  
Or has the woman tempted me  
And fled?  
I despair, but ah!  
Here comes the waiter.

(2007)

## THE BLOATED CALF

In the Black Land flows  
Hathor's life to the Green Sea,  
her never-ending blood  
renews the sinews  
of the people.

I saw a sacrificial calf  
cast on her water,  
seeking the same end,  
bloated and unafraid  
of crocodiles or man.

The river goddess  
hurries not  
and always feeds her own.

(2007)

Another poem from my long-in-progress epic novel about the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty in ancient Egypt.

## THE INSULT

I.

Winter wanes and  
slouches north,  
where it abides  
in slumber,

tossing insult,  
chilly wake,  
reminders of  
its plunder.

Unwelcome now  
for months of  
wrathful ice  
and cold,

It melts against  
the southern breeze,  
a promise,  
i've been told.

II.

This ancient oak  
rebirths a bud,  
ignorant of  
insult!

How it knows  
it's time to grow  
and thrive again,  
I wonder?

(2007)

## TO AN IMAGINARY PHOTOGRAPH

You float here  
a permanence unfettered  
by closed eyes.

Your image is a picture  
always ready to appear  
in my mind's eye.

You maintain a presence  
without effort,  
without a frame,

without a warning  
shouted out.  
Beautiful!

I see you here  
Yet cannot grasp you.  
Tempting!

I have sworn,  
"No more!"  
Yet you linger.

I want to hold you  
long and carefully,  
but have not the will.

I want to feel your breath,  
your hand-rough hair,  
your trembling finger,

yet I fear you,  
Beauty; the consequences  
of those acts

would frame me  
in your glass,  
trap me there

to linger for  
your eye, your touch,  
forevermore.

(2008)

## TOAST

Lift your glass  
My dearest friends,  
And you all are,

That we may swear  
Our time together  
Was not enough,

To finish every thought  
We shared and dreamed  
And troubled over.

Lift your glasses  
That if we meet again,  
We will share more

Than drink, and pain,  
And memory.

(2003)

## TWO PLEASANTRIES

One is the light  
that suffuses the room  
And makes the photos  
of my dead animals  
glow in the night.

The other is the feather  
that tickles my heart  
When I remember  
how we loved our days  
together in the sun.

(2009)

## UNREQUITTED

If I spoke the words  
You would have me mouth  
My dreams would perish  
Into yours.

If I said the thing  
You wish that I would say  
Your dream would claim  
My dreams.

If for a moment I said  
The words to you  
My soul would be in  
Your heart.

If for a minute I spoke  
Those words to you  
My life would flow in  
Your blood.

If for an hour I confessed  
The way I love you  
My dreams would lie in  
Your bed.

But if I choose to be silent  
In that moment  
In that minute  
For that hour

What a dream I will lose!

(2005)

## A SONNET FOR CELESTRIA

My Princess' eyes are brighter than the sun.  
A flower's not as red as her lips' red.

As snow is white, her eyes compare to none.  
Like precious chains, gold hair waves from her head.

I've seen roses dappled red and white,  
But winsome roses I see in her blush.

And in most essence there is less delight  
Than in her breath that causes blood to rush.

I'd love to hear her speak, ---yet well I know  
That music hath no more a pleasing sound.

I grant I never saw a goddess go,  
As does my Princess, walking on the ground.

And yet, by God, I hide my love so rare  
As any she may hold up to compare.

(December 2006)

– with thanks to Wm. Shakespeare's

*"My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"*

Written in answer to a challenge from a blogger.

## WILLOWS (2006)

In this place of splintered wood  
Along the river's mudded edge  
The oaks and ashes flung aside  
Like tinderwood and broken twigs  
Bear testament to the roiling waters  
That tore them limb from trunk  
A scant two weeks ago.

My eyes measure the distant shore  
Two hundred yards across the open  
Where the limestone rocks have dried  
To reveal their permanence to the sky.

The river here is always brown  
A coffee that reflects the clouds  
In tans and ochres, never white  
Or on a wet blue or green field.

The day is almost warm and dry  
And could it be the last try of Autumn,  
Or is it a harbinger of Spring?  
A warming warning of what's to come?

The willows stand bent but never broken  
Here where stronger trunks were felled  
When the river's course filled up from rain  
And choked the nearby fields and roads.

The willows bend against the strain  
Like yokes against the oxen's back.  
The willows always bend and give  
And never break whatever flails them.

This water coursing past is part of me  
The wellsprings of my innocent youth

Where I played and learned and went away  
And late last year returned.

This wood that is my body bends to sit  
And contemplate a lifelong journey.  
The trek began not far from here  
Where I went to seek my fortune.

And here I sit to ponder all the tempests  
And the floods that came against me.  
I see the broken wood and wonder  
At this unsullied body my soul inhabits.

All the misfortunes that I endured  
Could not keep me away from here  
To earn the realization I have found –  
That lies in tatters all around me.

I caught the fortunate wind of chance  
And not unhappy circumstances  
That swept me here today.  
My eyes come back to the willows.

Bent and defiant, the willow tree  
Stands against the wind and water  
Never broken, yielding to the elements,  
And never submits to be swept away.

Though I have suffered dear in life  
I came back to this river's edge  
Bent many times against the winds,  
The waters of misfortune and despair.

Yet here we stand again together,  
willows unbroken.





September 2000, Vatican. Notice the cap.

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