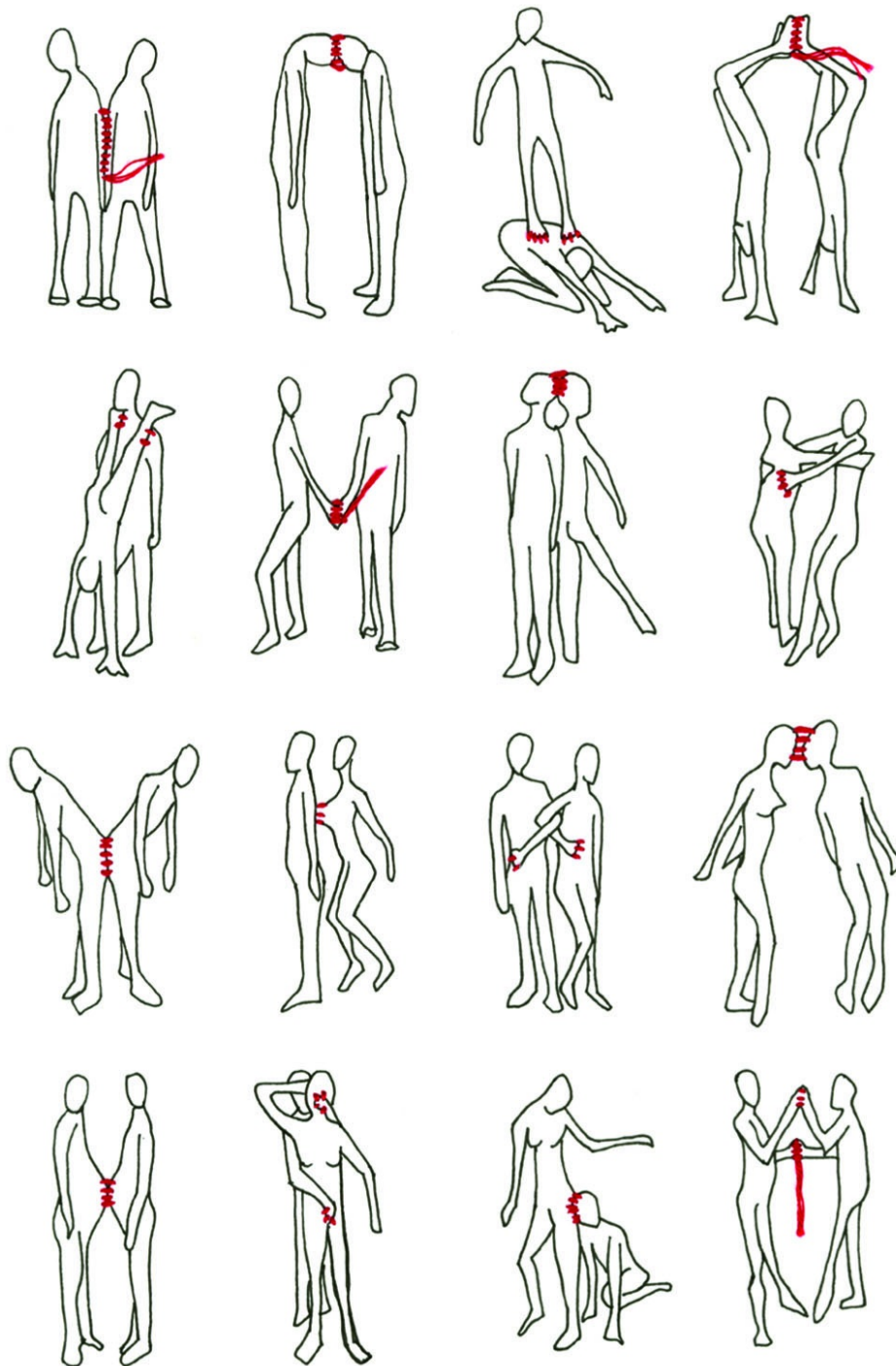


shattered sonnets  
love cards and other off and  
back handed importunities



olena kalytiak davis

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shattered sonnets love cards  
and other off and back handed importunities

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**olena kalytiak davis**



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*they thought it queer i didn't rise*  
~~*i thought a lie would be queerer*~~

---

*e.d.*

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## **forgoodisthelifeendingfaithandfitfully**

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**dedication**

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## sweet reader, flanneled and hilled

Reader unmov'd and Reader unshaken, Reader uneduc'd  
and untterrified, through the long-loud and the sweet-still  
I creep toward you. Toward you, I thistle and I climb.

I crawl, Reader, servile and cervine, through this blank  
season, counting—I sleep and I sleep. I sleep,  
Reader, toward you, loud as a cloud and deaf, Reader, deaf

as a leaf. Reader: *Why don't you turn  
pale?* and, *Why don't you tremble?* Jaded, staid  
Reader, You—who can read this and not even

flinch. Bare-faced, flint-hearted, recoilless  
Reader, dare you—Rare Reader, listen  
and be convinced: Soon, Reader,

soon you will leave me, for an italian mistress:  
for her dark hair, and her moon-lit  
teeth. For her leopardi and her cavalcanti,

for her lips and clavicles; for what you want  
to eat, eat, eat. Art-lover, rector, docent!  
Do I smile? I, too, once had a brash artless

feeder: his eye set firm on my slackening  
sky. He was true! He was thief! In the celestial sense  
he provided some, some, some

(much-needed) relief. Reader much-slept with, and Reader I will die  
without touching, You, Reader, You: mr. small-  
weed, mr. broad-cloth, mr. long-dark-day. And the italian mis-

fortune you will heave me for, for  
her dark hair and her moonlit-teeth. You will love her well in-  
to three-or-four cities, and then, you will slowly

sink. Reader, I will never forgive you, but not, poor  
cock-sure Reader, not, for what you think. O, Reader  
Sweet! and Reader Strange! Reader Deaf and Reader

Dear, I understand you yourself may be hard-  
pressed to bare this small and unnecessary burden  
having only just recently gotten over the clean clean heart-

break of spring. And I, Reader, I am but the daughter  
of a tinker. I am not above the use of bucktail spinners,  
white grubs, minnow tails. Reader, worms

---

and sinkers. This and these curtail me  
to be brief: Reader, our sex gone  
to wild weather. Yes Reader Yes—that feels much-much

better. (And my new Reader will come to me empty-  
handed, with a countenance that roses, lavenders, and cakes.  
And my new Reader will be only mildly disappointed.

My new Reader can wait, can wait, can wait.) Light  
-minded, snow-blind, nervous, Reader, Reader, troubled, Reader,  
what'd ye lack? Importunate, unfortunate, Reader:

*You are cold. You are sick. You are silly.*

Forgive me, kind Reader, forgive me, I had not intended to step this quickly this far  
back. Reader, we had a quiet wedding: he & I, the parson

& the clerk. Would I could, stead-fast, gracile facile Reader! Last,  
good Reader, tarry with me, jessa-mine Reader. Dar-  
(jee)ling, bide! Bide, Reader, tired, and stay, stay, stray Reader,

true. *R.: I had been secretly hoping this would turn into a love  
poem.* Disconsolate. Illiterate. Reader,  
I have cleared this space for you, for you, for you.



## small quilled poem with no taste for spring

---

In spring all the poems that need to be written  
Have. You are neither dejected nor relieved. Scrape and  
Paint. Scrape and paint a grey house white.  
Feel something! Your husband, the one married to all the appetites,  
Shouts to someone up on a ladder, someone who looks sort of  
Like you: disinterested, spated, thin as a cloud.  
It's spring again and so the melancholiacs. And so the fat  
Sharp animals pace your roof at night: feeding, quilled, recurrent  
Dreams. You will never live up to this  
Life, they will never refer to you as voluptuous.  
You can't remember the last time  
you wore a dress. You pressed your mouth  
To the phone.

---

## may be you are like me: scared and awake

A wreath of violets lain where my brain used to be. Matutinal,  
frantic. The usual. Scalded and cold. I descend. I work like a bird.  
I hear spring coming from a long mile off. A distant jungle-meadow.  
It comes, it sings. Says: To be heard you must be let, be in. To be heard  
It is best to hum, like water. It's true, I am barnacled and black. The un-  
Derbelly, the sternum, the prow.

Was, I used to confess the nuns.

Was, the prettier they were the less they said. Week after week whispered  
The one I loved like a secret: "I must avow. I'm of that type that's mostly  
Hype." I let Him forgive her merely on the strength of her brow. Sister,  
Says I, wear it like a wife. Then I'd go wash my hands in mint and rose.  
May be, you are like me: all pose.

May be, you are cutting each word harder

And harder, to listen. I'm all *watchandwile,waitingtobe Called*. Lordy-lordy-lord,  
When I asked to be left alone, I didn't mean, like, now, like, this. Full-deep:  
All solace and solecism. Un-sail-able. Un-vale-able. To spring, to light, to sleep.

## in the clear long after

---

Spring is cheap, but clean of sky. Long after she used to meet him on the sly. He didn't say much, because to speak you need a voice, need lead. Among the dead there were such fresh ghosts, they were still breathing. Through their mouths. Time, time, to adjust to an other. An ether O so—No—too sweet. Intox-icated with permeability. 'Tis noxious, to eat evanescence. However steadily, however slowly. They stemmed into heady blows.

They missed the stain. Of blue berries and argument. They missed their lips. The yew and the thorns. They missed. Their flaws.

O, to be stung by an errant bee. O, to sting.  
O, to see you again. Covered in spring.

## march licked me with all his brown lack

---

as if  
someone just handed me  
a bouquet  
made solely,  
entirely,  
of the absence  
of the word:  
*Abundance*.  
Thereby hand-  
ing me  
everything!

O, to Lack!

I too am made  
(mostwholey) of that.

## shattered sonnet #3

---

Love brought  
me a handful  
of pussy willows to place  
near my face. A sick head  
and a sick heart ought be licked  
back to health, said said Love,  
all stealth. All stick and cue. Love,  
didn't I tell you, not to foot  
over threshold of mine? But  
Love was over, Love was under.  
Love was in. Love was wrought.  
Love swept the house, then, Love was  
done. Aye, There's the rub!  
The phoenix and the turtle  
dove? Ha! Love, Love is  
nought.



## dear abiah

---

'Tis true,  
we are all made of root  
And rue; head-down and head-long, trailing  
Like the arbutus.  
O great Arbiter! I keep  
A terrible secret. The staves acre. And the back  
Ache. And the Longing,  
long and low.

Old, hard news, Desire. That prick! And that  
Sting. All but made. All the promises  
I intend. To make. To keep. To bend.

So-long So-sweet! I will  
Miss you! Doubt not, or do. I was true. I am  
Plaintive, but pliant. Think-me-not  
Heart-less or heed-less. None the less: I will.  
Ease back. Once again. Yes. Exactly. As does

Spring.

## a small number

---

So far, have managed, Not  
Much. So far, a few fractures, a few factions, a Few  
Friends. So far, a husband, a husbandry, Nothing  
Too complex, so far, followed the Simple  
Instructions. Read them twice. So far, memorized three Moments,  
Buried a couple deaths, those turning faces. So far, two or Three  
Sonnets. So far, some berrigan and Some  
Keats. So far, a scanty list. So far, a dark wood. So far, Anti-  
Thesis and then, maybe, a little thesis. So far, a small Number  
Of emily's letters. So far, tim not dead. So far, Matt  
Not dead. So far, jim. So far, Love  
And love, not so far. Not so love. So far, no-Hope.  
So far, all face. So far, scrapped and scraped, but Not  
With grace. So far, not Very.

## the lais of lost long days . . .

---

Today I used my new little hummingbird of a poem to get a big old hummingbird of  
A bug out the only open, able, window. All my poems are hummingbirds, are windows,  
Are poems, mostly painted shut. Mostly, suffocate and smile. But, hey, I know a good  
Simile when I trap it, under glass. *Like a cup. Discarded. Sordid. YOU COULD  
NOT.* The visitors come from all over to see how I can attend to so little for so long. So  
Long so sweet! I said that in one of my latest poems. (One of my last.) I have finally got  
Ten permission to repeat myself! Myself, never was one to relive the past, but now  
I've seen that one clip many many times. *Because your Face would put out  
Jesus'*. Still enjoy it. *That new Grace.* Still think I'm sitting too far back. *Pale. Home  
Sick. Eye.* Still realize it isn't great art. Nothing is. Wire sculpture that. I know, I know,  
It's been done. As I am sure someone has already lived this life, this wife, for me. Poor  
Fuck. Sick Fish. Lately, I want, (o!), I wish, all my poems to end in, to end with,  
Spring. The word, I mean. *AND I, COULD I?* Lately, I head steadily for,  
Tread slowly toward, Abelard. Froward, I mean. I mean, Aberdeen.

June twenty seven eight nine nineteen sixty seventy ninety six seven  
eight

Some one just got on their bicycle, and is, and is  
. . . GONE! The Sun makes his mellow his slow his  
high-low-way. I send cigarette and coffee drunk postcards to  
. . . EVERYBODY! Joe Joe Joe Joe Joe! How hot are you?  
To summer, to summit (to submit) properly is a mighty, is a difficult  
Task. Jenn! O Floating Friend! Are you still on the ferry to . . . BUCK  
TOWN? There are new guests in my beds but, no.  
No visitors, no visions, Love, O. Dear Mary, Hello. It is 9:47 in the long  
blonde morning. Good Morning, Fair Warning! Hell-  
o. O! Luminous Straggler, (don't you know?) all  
my post-its are really addressed to no one,  
no one, two, three, four but (YOU . . . DON'T . . .  
KNOW) O!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I sigh,  
I sign, with a somber sobriquet,

yrs, X. O.

---

## WOW

in sleep and in sickness  
in drought and in doubt  
for porous for curious for highly and dangerous-  
ly adventurous/experimental/momentous  
(let me not to the marriage admit pedants, lice, pedophiles)  
in truth and in truth and in hg1 sticky-er tricky-er wile-  
ier truths (no, not the truths behind that mountain but of the sky  
behind that sky)  
in sleep and in sickness, once again,  
in sleep and in sickness, once again,  
in clamsauce and in stealth  
(let me)  
(not!)  
through through through  
and for for for for  
(Admit it!)  
EVER!

do you?  
tickbird take?  
do you?  
swallow?  
  
whole?

## six apologies, lord

---

I Have Loved My Horrible Self, Lord.  
I Rose, Lord, And I Rose, Lord, And I,  
Dropt. Your Requirements, Lord. 'Spite Your Requirements, Lord,  
I Have Loved The Low Voltage Of The Moon, Lord,  
Until There Was No Moon Intensity Left, Lord, No Moon Intensity Left  
For You, Lord. I Have Loved The Frivolous, The Fleeting, The Frightful  
Clouds. Lord, I Have Loved Clouds! Do Not Forgive Me, Do Not  
Forgive Me LordandLover, HarborandMaster, GuardianandBread, Do Not.  
Hold Me, Lord, O, Hold Me

Accountable, Lord. I Am  
Accountable. Lord.

Lord It Over Me,  
Lord It Over Me, Lord. Feed Me

Hope, Lord. Feed Me  
Hope, Lord, Or Break My Teeth.

Break My Teeth, Sir,

In This My Mouth.

---

## the unbosoming

I have been a day boarder, Lord. I have preferred the table to the Bed.  
I have proffered, Lord, and I have profited, Lord, but little, but not. I was Bored,  
Lord, I was heavy, Lord. Heavy bored. Hopeless, Lord, hideous, Lord. Sexless.  
I was in love, Lord, but not with You. The nine malic moulds, Lord.  
The butcher, the baker, the under-taker. Lord, I was taken under. I Repeat  
Myself, Lord. I re-peat myself as the way back, the way back to Myself,  
Lord. I have trembled. His face, Lord, and Yours. I am unlovely, Lord, I Nam  
Not precious, Lord. Spy better, Love, and You will see: Inamnothing. I have Seen  
How lovely, Lord, how lovely You are, Lord, but I refused to kneel. I Refuse  
To knell Your loveliness. I refuse to kiss. And I refuse to tell. I am unwilling, Love.  
I am unwell. Unkempt. My hideous loins, Love. My body, which is all Wrack  
And screw, Love. All slack and crewel. At Your beck and call, Love, at His Beck  
And call. Crestfallen, Love. Of the fallen breast. Un-clean of eye. Loose of Thigh.  
Ridiculous, Love. Most serious, Love. Unshod. Unshriven. In vain and in Rain,  
Love. I Live and I Wire. I Wive, Lord, but I Fathom Not.

## of yawl and ketch

---

I have been on watch. Belowstairs, and, Below  
Decks. I have watched Night in her fast, Her Feast! O Bellow  
-ing Night! Your dark glow, Your worms, Your past. You-Who  
Always approach with deceptive, with rosy Retinue

Of dawn. Of dusk. Like you, I have a smallish Task.  
O Night, You Tragedian! You placed such splendid Hall  
-ucinations before me. Aft

-er those after hours I Yaw  
And I catch, but they, They carry it with them, steadily Aft:  
Their hips, their faces, Their breasts, their Masks.



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