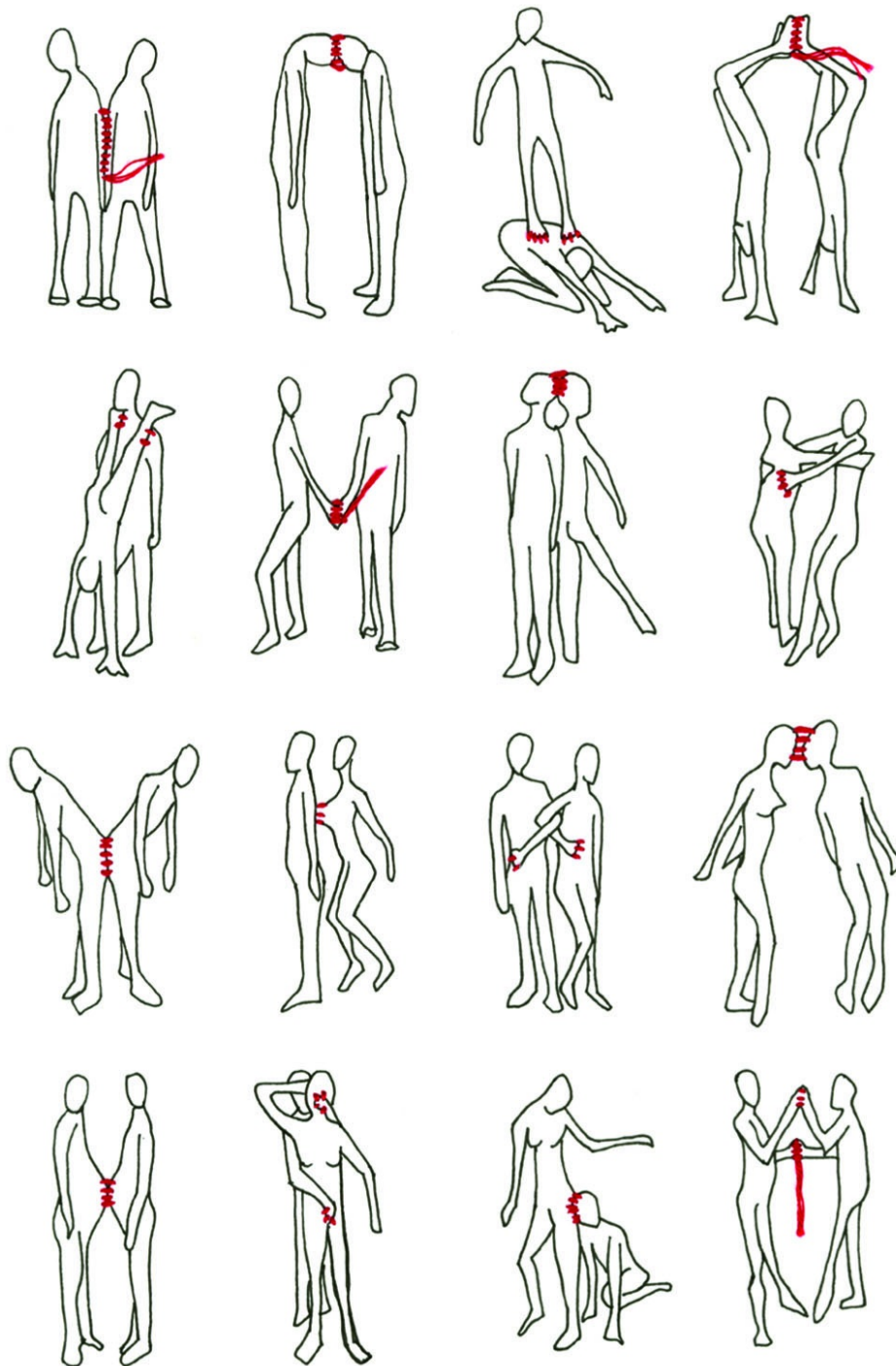


shattered sonnets
love cards and other off and
back handed importunities



olena kalytiak davis

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and other off and back handed importunities

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This e-book edition was created through a special grant provided by the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. Copper Canyon Press would like to thank Constellation Digital Services for their partnership in making this e-book possible.

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

e.d.

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dedication

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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