

## A Homespun Heart

When my great-great-Grandmother passed she left a letter in her will, to be given to her granddaughters, and her great-granddaughters. I am not sure if it speaks of a time lost to us or not. Maybe there is a core truth, a reality forgotten or misplaced by men and women today that would change things for the better if re-discovered or recovered from the thrown out bathwater. I do know that my niece has lived it out, and is happily married now. The letter reads as follows...

My Mother, had those wonderful eyes, replete with depth and peace. They were the start of my life's journey, like the first rays of dawn, she was my golden providence, to set me on my way. The sky's light is blue like they were, and my mother's face was weathered, but hers was the radiance of holiness, and her true beauty would put to shame all the vanity of the beautiful.

Everyone said that I resembled my mother. In my childhood I used to wrongly feel resentment towards this. It made me bitter with my mirror. I thought that it was God's unfairness which was wrapped round me -- that my fair features were not mine by right, but had come to me by some accident. All that remained for me to ask of God in repayment for this slight was, that I might grow up to be a model of what a wife should be, as one reads it in love poems.

I was married into a rich man's family. When I was a child, I was quite familiar with the description of the Prince of the fairy stories. But my husband's face was not the kind that one's imagination would look for in fairyland. It was dark, even as mine was fair. The feeling of shrinking in front of people, which I had about my own lack of physical beauty, was lifted a little. Just as a touch of regret was left lingering in my heart, because he was not that fairystory chiselled man.

But I soon learned, that when physical appearance escapes the scrutiny of our eyes, a man's truth enters the sanctuary of our hearts, and there find truer eyes. I was taught in my childhood, how devotion is beauty itself, in its inner aspect. When my mother arranged the different fruits, on the white stone plate, and gently waited by my father's side while he sat down to his meals, her service would transcend outward forms with true beauty. Even in my infancy I could feel its power. It transcended all debates, or doubts, or calculations: it was the pure music of the soul.

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I distinctly remember after my marriage, when, early in the morning, I would cautiously and silently get up and prepare my husband's bath and clothes without waking him, how at such moments I could feel the my soul shining out like the morning star.

One day, he happened to awake, and smiled as he asked me: "What is that, Eden? What are you doing?"

I can never forget the shame of being discovered by him. He might possibly have thought that I was trying to earn worthiness secretly. But no, no! What I was doing had nothing to do with merit. It was my woman's heart, which must worship in order to love.

My father-in-law's house was old in dignity from the days of the sugar plantations. Some of its manners were of the Aristocracies of the past, some of its customs of centuries old. But my husband was completely secular. He was the first of the house to go through a college course and take his M.A. degree instead of serving in the military as all his forefathers had done. His elder brother had died young, of drink, and had left no children. My husband did not drink and was not given to dissipation. So foreign to the family was his abstinence, that to many it hardly seemed decent! Purity, they imagined, was only becoming in those on whom fortune had not smiled. It is the moon which has room for stains, not the stars.

My husband's parents had died long ago, and his old grandmother was mistress of the house. My husband was the apple of her eye, the jewel on her bosom. And so he never met with much difficulty in overstepping any of the ancient ways. When he brought in tutors, to teach me and be my companions, he stuck to his resolve in spite of the poison secreted by all the wagging tongues at home and outside in the extended family of the family's business interests.

When we married my husband had then just got through his B.A. examination and was reading for his M.A. degree; so he had to stay in the capital to attend college. He used to write to me almost every day, a few lines only, and simple words, but his bold, round handwriting would look up into my face, oh, so tenderly! I kept his letters in an ivory box and covered them every day with the flowers I gathered in the garden.

By this time the Prince of the fairy tale had faded, like the moon in the morning light. I had the King in my real world enthroned in my heart. I was his queen. I had my seat by his side. But my real joy was, that my true place was at his feet.

Since then, I have been educated, and introduced to the modern age in its own terms, and therefore these words that I write seem to blush with shame in their prose setting. Except for my new acquaintance with modern life, I would still believe, quite naturally, that just as my being born a woman was not in my own hands, so too the devotion of a real woman's love is not like a hackneyed passage quoted from a romantic novel to be impiously written down in a school-girl's copy-book.

But my husband would not give me any opportunity for worship. That was his greatness. They are cowards who claim absolute devotion from their wives as their right; that is a humiliation for both husband and wife.

His love for me seemed to overflow my limits by its flood of wealth and service. But my necessity was more for giving than for receiving; for true love is a pauper, who can make his flowers bloom in the wayside dust, better than in the crystal jars kept in the drawing-room.

My husband could not break completely with the old-time traditions which prevailed in our family. It was difficult, therefore, for us to meet at any hour of the day we pleased. I knew exactly the time that he could come to me, and that permitted our meeting to have all the care of loving preparation. It was like the rhyming of a poem; it had to come through the path of the metre.

After finishing the day's work and taking my afternoon bath, I would do up my hair and renew my heart's smile and put on my finest dress, carefully pressed. Then, I would bring back my body and mind from all distractions of household duties, I would dedicate it at this special hour, with these secret special ceremonies, to one individual. That time, each day, with him was short; but it was also infinite.

My husband used to say, that man and wife are equal in love because of their equal claim on each other. I never argued the point with him, but my heart said that devotion never stands in the way of true equality; it only raises the level of the ground for both. Therefore the joy of the higher equality remains permanent; it never slides down to the vulgar level of triviality.

My beloved, it was worthy of you that you never expected worship from me. But if you had accepted it, you would have done me a real service. You showed your love by decorating me, by educating me, by giving me what I asked for, and what I did not ask for aloud. I have seen what depth of love there was in your eyes when you gazed at me. I have known the secret sigh of pain I suppressed at your departures. You loved my body as if it were a flower of paradise. You loved my whole nature as if it had been given you by the rarest providence.

Such lavish devotion made me proud to think that the wealth was all my own which drove you to me. But vanity such as this only checks the flow of free surrender in a woman's love. When I sit on the queen's throne and claim homage, then the claim only goes on magnifying itself and is never satisfied. Can there be any real happiness for a woman in merely feeling that she has power over a man? To surrender one's pride in devotion is woman's only salvation. And that is what I found with you.

This is my hope for you my daughters,

Eden

## My Empty Word

In my own private vision I see you as  
...everything.  
The loves I love in you,  
cannot be counted.  
Unless I count that which is beyond count too.

You are so many perfections.  
Perfect to in your imperfections,  
That fit me too well,  
to deny God is, anymore.

I know you want to be loved,  
As I want to be loved.  
Not for this or for that,  
but for your all.  
And for that...  
bright shadow,  
beyond the all of you.

The bright shade of us  
we cast out from our presence,  
Into eternity.  
This of you,  
Meets this of me.  
It met before Us,  
And continues after.

You -are- love, my Love.  
I am love,  
and my loving reaches out.  
It seeks to cling,  
to cling forever,  
to that part of you,  
that my poor words can never ever,  
speak.

In me there is instead,  
a non-word,  
A cipher.  
X.  
An un-speaking.  
A sign.

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And in that sign my fingers form,  
In that shape they carve in empty space,  
There is where my love of you is still beginning to begin.

And I will die  
before it can ever say it all.

## Words About my Friend

You're doubtlessly going to think I am exaggerating but I know people who would tell you I am not when I say this...

To look her in the face was like looking into the sun, and you felt the need to squint, and the rays of light, slowly turning in your eye, would dance with a thousand angels. To feel her speaking to you was as unspeakably sweet as the taste of snow on a hot summer day. Her eyes turned to you were as comforting as a warm spring breeze after a season of icy gales. She waved a long stem of grass at me and my heart was wax embraced by flame. Her foot sparked the silver splash of the brook, her hair laughing around her throat, such as her can only honestly be written out in wind, and water. The whispering blue of her eyes, her walking grace bright moonlight, that glance over her shoulder veiled only by a sudden shy silence. All this she was. And she crashed her way through the sea ice of strong men's hearts, her banners flying triumphally. And she had no idea of the power expended when all she knew she was doing was making new friends.

That is how they discovered her. Accidentally. On her way to a vacant field to paint, or on her way from writing in her journal up in one of her favorite trees. But you followed her, and you watched to see colors you had never been taught before were living in the grass and trees and sunlight of an abandoned lot. You followed her, and if she trusted what she saw in your eyes, she let you listen to the words of a heart unstained by living in your unfastidious world. She was the rarest of all things, and a tiny few were blessed with her presence for a time, by a God who wastes his treasures on men.

She brought hope, restored belief in the world's goodness, loved every single person materially and with all her feeling, thoughts, and soul. She worked tirelessly. She leaned on nobody even as standing firm for all who needed perfect

guardianship put wrinkles on her young eyes. Never did she shrug, nor complain, even as inside she fought against every gripe and groan all of us let escape our lips.

She was the true and purely loving daughter to her horrid father. She mothered her mother, and she fed them both and her several siblings with what she scratched out of her garden in the woods. And when she was stricken down she whored to pay the bills, and buy the food she could no longer grow. And as she whored he made better men out of perverts, and they too were drowned in her love and reborn. She had met betrayal, and it was betrayal that came away scarred.

She was a trusted counsellor, an impassioned poet, an artist of flawless vision, a benefactor to many, a dependant to none. She was an all-forgiving mother who was as unbending as the staff of law itself, and her law was love.

She was a ruthless defender of women bullied by men who had more savvy than her, who had more education than her, who had more experience than her, but no skill at all with overcoming a rapier of charming ridicule wielded by her righteous heart. Her sword was justice. All that watched her nova of fury in a strip club, protecting the feelings of prostitutes, felt her heat and could tell you how it felt like it was just last night. To her lovers she was a "pest" who teased their foibles with no meanness ever. To her friends she was rock of unswerving devotion. To her opponents she was an unstoppable force, and they were in front of the immovable object of her aim.

She is the standard I have come to measure all people by, all love by, all weariness by. She was the imprimatur of a carelessly generous God on a world made ugly by those who never knew her. I am more of a human being, of a man, of a lover, than I could have been before I knew her. I'm not half the human being, the man, or the lover, that I know I will be because of her example.

She was not the Alpha or the Omega. She was that star in between, for us to set our compass by. She turned 23 and was killed recently by being too nice to the wrong man. She would have wanted it that way, I think. I still want him rotting in a grave. But I don't have to hope she will forgive me. I'm sure she already has.

## Words End

In my heart.  
In my mind's eye.  
In me where you live.  
There I run out of...  
...words.

We live in a world of words.  
We \*are\* words,  
In the hearts and minds of those we love.

Language.  
It's the atmosphere that connects us here,  
Envelopes us skin on skin,  
Here and there.  
No matter how far apart we are,  
How far apart,  
...In space.  
How far apart in words.

And what word in me is there of You?  
None.

That word lay,  
Just beyond the end of me.

Just beyond my grasp,  
The reach of my language is exhausted,  
And there beyond it all is You.

---The thing that gave me all words, --  
    --all my language, all it's hopes, --  
        --the hope of my skin, to touch your skin.

My words to touch yours.  
Was "You."

You are my heart's igniting spark,  
And I incandesce,  
Trying to engulf you in my heat.  
But what ignited me,  
is what stops me.

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I am stopped,  
From reaching beyond my self,  
by self.

You are Love.  
Love beyond words.

And so I drink to this.  
I make myself drunk.  
That beyond all the logic of all my many languages,  
There is only one word that justifies all...

You.

## Beside herself

A thousand times I've failed,  
Bleeding hours away.  
And unrelenting mercy reigns.  
A Razor kiss, my lips tonight.  
A cut as deep as mind.  
Excrucia's probing just to find  
One drop of arterial sympathy.  
No blood for veins where mercy reigns.  
Death in sweet devotion,  
Breath in sweet slow motion  
Love choked isolation.  
From hobby to Revelation,  
She's choking now on hope.  
She stumbles again a thousand times,  
Mesmerized by all your rhymes.  
Caught again in that never-safe space  
Looking for that drop of grace.

She Bleeds away the hours,  
consuming her from inside out.  
Mastering the art of losing self.  
Beside herself, and inside out.

Everlasting, all else fading,  
She loves you from the inside out.  
From deep inside her soul cries out.  
Beside herself, and inside out.

The biggest lie she ever told,  
Her deepest fears now growing bold.  
The boy who said he'd never leave,  
Who kissed her hard last new year's eve.

He wanted to know,  
He told her so.  
He told her, he sold her,  
he dug down deep.  
He lost some sleep.  
He spent his time.  
He lost his mind.  
He wanted to know her inside out.  
She's elated.  
Palpitated.  
She was beside herself, and inside out.

The truest vow she ever made,  
The saddest prayer she ever prayed.  
She swallowed once more all her doubt.  
She swallowed all,  
She swallowed pride,  
Because that's all she ever was,  
Beside herself, and inside out.

It was only lust turned inside out  
Her love, her soul, her heart hung out.  
She's dying to be anything  
besides herself, and inside out.

The saddest sound she ever heard,  
That's all she said with just one word.  
With no compassion, fell apart,  
she lost her mind, she killed her heart,  
beside herself, and inside out.

Now she jumps like a gunshot rabbit,  
Like a deer from a step-broke twig.  
Freaked by the sight,

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Of a man too close.  
Her heart too close.  
She's beside herself, and inside out.

She's stuck in the designs of an angel,  
Conjuring ghosts to destroy memory.  
Lost in her mirror tragedy.  
To erase self loathing,  
To bleed bone dry,  
Cutting deep,  
To look for the lie.

Her sight's what's clouded,  
by the pain killing pills.  
Dying with devotion,  
In her razor filled ocean,  
No time for comfort,  
Immune to vexation,  
Choking and drowning on her isolation.

With her amontillado heart walled off inside,  
She keeps time with her smiling partner inside.  
She dances alone like the Queen of the dead.  
Running from dangers trapped in her head.  
She has no clue what she's all about,  
Beside her self, and inside out.