

# *Love and Ordinary Things*

*Poems from the Wheat Field, kitchen, dance floor and heart.*

Marcy Goldman

River Heart Press



Montreal, Canada

**Love and Ordinary Things**  
**Poems from the Wheat Field, Kitchen, Dance Floor and Heart**

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**Other Books by Marcy Goldman**

The Baker's Four Seasons, 2014, River Heart Press (print, eBook)  
When Bakers Cook, 2013 River Heart Press (print, eBook)  
A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Baking, 2009 Whitecap Books (print, eBook)  
The New Best of Betterbaking.com, 2009 Whitecap Books (print, eBook)  
A Passion for Baking, 2014, River Heart Press (print, eBook)  
A Passion for Baking, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2007 Oxmoor House (print)

For my sons,  
Jonathan, Gideon and Ben  
*and*  
For anyone who's ever been in love with life.

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# *Love and Ordinary Things*

## **Preface**

Like most poetry, this is a very personal collection that focuses on subjects most dear and near to me. Each and every poem represents the anchors of my personal and professional life as a single mother of three sons, professional pastry chef, cookbook author, Internet magazine host, tango dancer, mistress of scents and perfumes, and of course, as a writer. In essence, the poems here are a result of how as an observer of life, I see life unfold in, around and before me.

I've spent a core part of my days as a baker and cookbook author, many sunny days (when my boys were younger) coaching baseball, and many more years on the dance floor as a tango devotee and avid dancer. No matter how busy I've been, I've always managed to play hooky. Those are days I've wandered my own city, the creative person's most affordable way to travel to an exotic place, with a pretty notebook or journal tucked in my purse. I've had amazing urban adventure discovering countless new and strange cafés where I could sit and sip wonderful mugs of fresh, hot coffee. It's been in those places and times where I enjoy a moment to can catch my breath and record my thoughts. Just as often, en route somewhere, I have stopped, parked my car, and jotted something down, little notes or ideas. Other times, when I simply stay still and breathe, or when I am at peace, quietly kneading bread or shaping scones that my reflections distill and are converted into poems. Over time, these notes, jottings and reflections became this poetry collection.

As the title suggests, this is a book about love and ordinary things: our day-to-day life, how we live, love and experience our days. Of course, none of it is ordinary and love itself, is the least ordinary thing of all!

I'm not surprised that raising my sons, and my love for them, baking bread, creating music, running to tango, and lassoing scent, fill my poetry as well as my soul and spirit. My reverence and appreciation for my friends, my love affair with nature and flowers, the ins and outs of human nature and my own sense of joy and passion, are the other components that form the foundation of this book.

My poems are also necessarily shaded by the nuances of finding life, love and adventure at mid-life. Along with all else, this is the 'seasoning' of my seasons, in and out of the kitchen.

Poems, like the best of my recipes are for sharing, learning and hopefully being inspired from. Moreover, poems, and life for that matter, are like wheat; both seem to be about separating the golden good stuff from the chaff.

When it comes to my writing, I am willing to wear my heart on my sleeve in service to the common good. The common good is that of human connection. The reward is however the feeling, however small or strange the emotion or mood, *someone* else has been there before or is with you there now. There's solace in the solitude when you realize it's a shared space. And once you know it's shared, you are also never alone.

*Marcy Goldman*

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## Spring Wheat



Spring wheat is best.

Planted early  
Harvested in heat  
A gift of the farmer  
To the baker in the town  
Earth, the casual celebrant  
Makes the marriage sound.

Spring wheat is best -  
It makes for flour of white gold  
That suits so much,  
Bread with chew and crust  
Sweet things with honey

The miller only imagines  
What the baker lass can do  
And I do.  
I do  
For I married the wheat a long time ago  
It flows in my veins and lusts in my soul  
I wear it as a dress  
And coil it as a crown  
Use the sheaf as a sash  
On my apron gown

Spring wheat is best.  
And to the wheat I am bound.

## Recipe for a Peckish Spirit



As a chef,  
I'm often asked  
How to woo an errant appetite,  
Peckish with some wound -  
How to enliven a hunger that's gone south.  
When dreams are detoured  
Leaving only doubt.

So I say,  
Coax it with herbs,  
Green and fresh  
Soothe it with lemon balm  
Or uplift it with ginger -  
Entice it with wine-red chilli  
Pungent with deep heat -  
Love it with vanilla beans  
Familiar and sweet -  
Cool it with mint  
Let it settle and heal  
With lavender tea, stirred with roses, cinnamon and orange peel.

The appetite will revive -  
It simply has no other choice  
And in time what was quiet and still  
Will once again rejoice.

But how to bring spirit to the plate?  
When the palate is empty  
Bereft of sentiment or chatter -  
How to court an unsung heart  
When dark moods have come to prey  
When the inner pantry feels bare  
And tumbleweed blows  
Through the spice shelf of life.  
When the heart is caught not singing  
What then?

Well, I say,  
The tonic is the same,  
The ladle ever poised, still pertains -  
Love that heart in great measure  
Don't stint on the elixir.  
Coax it with the breeze of the trees  
Soothe it with kisses  
Let it rise and breathe -  
Don't leave warmth to choice  
And in time,  
What was quiet and still  
Will once again rejoice.

## Apple Picking



One day,  
While they were apple picking  
She dropped her heart -  
There,  
In the grass,  
It nestled in the warm hay.  
And he picked it up,  
Thought it to be  
A windfall  
Or freefall.  
In any case,  
He slipped it  
In his pocket  
It stays there  
Still.  
She never found out  
Where or when it fell,  
Who retrieved it  
But every fall  
She can be seen  
Picking apples  
Beside him,  
In the orchard.

## Picking Apples with the Boys



Perfect day  
Artist requested autumn  
Sun like a pitcher  
Of spilled, melted butter  
Playing havoc on the orchard shadows

We strayed  
Idly -  
For the apples were plentiful  
From tree to tree  
Fruit beckoning  
Like rubies and garnets  
Competing  
Pick me, pick me!

Underneath one tree  
Cosy, quiet  
An empty niche  
We lingered in.  
Welcome to  
The House of McIntosh  
To Cortland Manner  
To Jonathan, Empire  
And stately Russet estate -  
All that apple offspring  
And my *own* -  
In the stillness of the orchard.

## **Ships**



Small sons  
Like small boats,  
Stay near the harbour  
Inclement weather  
Makes them nestle and hover.

But the gulls turn restless  
And small boats stir -  
Begin to jostle in the bay.

Even small sons  
Yearn to sail beyond the limits.  
The mother harbour  
Becomes the distant shore.  
I watch my sons sail out  
Like three tall ships  
That stride the waves  
And meet each crest.  
Bold and buoyant.

The gulls' cry  
Is both lament and cheer  
I whisper bon voyage  
And pray the weather stays clear.

## Ordinary Things



To say good morning  
 When day begins -  
 Or smile and nestle  
 And not leave the bed,  
 Or bring you coffee  
 So hot and misty  
 That it mingles with the steam  
 In my own breath  
 And yours.

To suddenly stare  
 Catching you with a wet dish  
 In your hand.  
 Or your touch on my cheek  
 Or sunlight dance on the sleeves  
 Of your sweater,  
 Your hands as they tie a knot  
 On a parcel I asked you to mail.  
 To stand close  
 And not yet touch -  
 The air between us  
 Teases my skin.

Shall I know these things  
 Or do without?  
 Love perishes in silence  
 Because it's not what love's about  
 Ordinary things  
 Ordinary things.

## Tango 05.14



Last night I had the  
Dance of my life  
With a man I did not know.  
He held out his hand  
And drew me on the floor,  
I heard the music start  
And the stars struck a chord

I felt the touch of his hand  
And his breath on my cheek,  
The beat of his heart  
Was stayed by heat,  
Within two bars  
I knew his every motion,  
Matched my steps  
To suit his devotion.  
I floated on a cloud  
We never had to speak

But,  
He wasn't you  
And it wasn't the same -  
No matter how he led  
No matter how in synch.  
I could waltz with him  
Glide in perfect harmony,  
A million eternities.  
And still,  
He wasn't you.  
He wasn't you.  
And I knew it in each beat.



If ever I am in your arms again  
I will dance on the spot.  
If ever I touch you again  
I will move to the music  
My heart knows is right  
Let my spirit dance with yours,  
While my soul takes off.

Because,  
He wasn't you  
He wasn't you.

## Tango Lessons



Do you know  
How to tango?  
Facile -  
You place your hand  
Softly on my back  
And it's  
Step, glide, glide  
If you will lead  
I will follow  
And gently bring you back  
Dance is just  
A matter of trust  
A simple exercise  
In parry and thrust.  
Can you tango -  
Will you tango with me?

## Shall We Dance?

The most beautiful three words in the language I know  
 Are not,  
 I love you.  
 They are, instead -  
 Shall we dance?

Someone asks you to dance,  
 You say yes –  
 Your feet grow wings -  
 Your heart flutters  
 And you enter the kingdom  
 Of someone else's arms,  
 Someone else's tutelage.  
 You have to let go  
 You *must* let go  
 And let them lead.  
 You have no say -  
 For the moment you said *yes*  
 You signed a contract  
 With your spirit and with theirs.  
 And now there's no quitting  
 Until the dance is done.  
 Or two, or three -  
 Or perhaps countless dances  
 Of unthinkable grace,  
 Until and when  
 He leads you back -  
 To where the others sit,  
 On those spare and rickety café chairs  
 Where the perfume mingles in fumes  
 Of small hunger, lesser fear and tempered hope.  
 You are no longer the same.  
 You are come back but are never really returned,  
 All because someone said:  
 Shall we dance?

## Lover's Lane



Dear love,  
Was that you who went by  
The other day?  
Did I not know to linger  
Was I remiss and just walk away?

Dear Heart,  
Did you not see me?  
When I stopped by the lake?  
That time when I was at the bakery  
Stopping for cake  
Did we both cross paths,  
The other day  
At the cleaners  
Or the school  
Or our favorite café?  
Was that you – heart of my soul?  
Who looked in my eyes?  
And I, thinking you a stranger  
Walked on by?

Dearest -  
I wish I knew  
What's keeping you  
In the meanwhile  
I've been fine  
I have forgotten how to regret,  
Have chosen not to pine.  
I have almost learned to live without love  
But not its promise –  
But I remember you, love -  
From a dream I once had.  
In it, you said,  
Wait up, stay true,  
Hold out for love instead  
Hold on, wait up -  
One day,  
Beside me  
You'll tread.

## About Women in the Kitchen



Some women  
Do it with perfume,  
Self-conscious touching  
Of the hair at the nape of their necks  
Or some gesture near the throat  
Quiet, sudden intake of breath  
A steady look in the eyes  
Then a quick look down  
And away -  
And then back to check.

Some women  
Bake spells with scents  
Yeast, flour, whisk and pin,  
All the sweetness honey affords.

I don't trust my wiles  
So it's pie and loaves,  
Apron lightly draped  
Flour smudge on  
A flushed cheek -  
An anachronism of femininity  
That fits me like a second skin.

## More Rolls, Please



4 am in the bakery  
An inferno rages  
Flour-dusted shadows  
Handmaidens to the wheat,  
Tend pots of frothing sourdough  
Wild yeasts, mustang spores  
Corralled by the baker's lasso  
Domesticated into dough.

The baker's peel  
Ever poised, battle ready  
Against fire and steam.  
Crusts crackle, spit and hiss:  
Baker's hosanna.

6 am  
Bread on a truck  
Still warm  
Noon and a bit:  
The ladies who dine,  
Suits on a power lunch -  
It's really just about breaking bread.

"White wine or red, Madam?"  
And, simply,  
"More rolls, please."

## Lavender in a Clay Pot



Lavender catches my gaze  
Weaves its way  
Spirits my heart

"I think I will pick some to dream by'  
For its scent is both constant and calm –

As the season comes and goes  
Indigo, lilac, violet blue -  
The song remains the same  
Whispering through fields of marigolds, poppies, and wild rose  
Lavender, sweet, pure, and quiet  
Remains.



## Peaches Still Life

Summer was  
A basket of peaches  
You couldn't resist -  
A farmers' market special  
Golden hued, scarlet blushed

The peaches were  
Ripe with promise  
Certain for pie,  
Yet were eaten  
One by one,  
Each a perfect summer day

Come early autumn  
The scent of peaches  
Can barely be recalled.  
Leaves fall,  
Apples drop  
The days quickly tumble  
Into sharp sunsets  
That awaken in frost.

The taste and time of peaches  
Seems much too far off,  
But the basket is empty  
And dusted with snow.

## The Winter Kitchen



The winter season settles in  
But not without that quiet din  
Of doves and feathers for snow  
That come lightly,  
So as not to bother Fall.

Butter and sugar dreams  
Laced with mistletoe -  
There is coffee on  
And cinnamon coats the air  
The hearth is waiting and warm -  
Impatient for that  
Winter baking storm.

## My Love Wrote Me a Letter



In-between the lines  
 That you wrote -  
 Between the crevices and the spaces  
 And the vowels mouthed by rote -  
 In each and every solitary note

In-between the breath and the intake  
 The caught air -  
 And awareness of space  
 Hung in the balance,  
 Pieces of your heart  
 Raw and tender  
 In that secret, quiet place.

I have lain under you  
 In-between those words.  
 Writhed in the cadence  
 Of a string of verbs -  
 Clung, rose and fell  
 In your embrace  
 On your tongue –  
 I have lain with you  
 Over you, under you and around  
 I have loved you  
 Between the lines  
 Of words unspoken,  
 Between the lines  
 Of all the lines  
 That you wrote.

## Visitor

Love came by the other day  
But I was baking bread  
And could not stray.  
There were yeasts to tame  
And doughs that needed tending,  
And so love left  
Not comprehending.

Love knocked on the window  
The other night.  
But I was dancing in the dark  
I did not turn,  
And never saw its light  
It said,  
Come be my partner  
I've a mood to court  
But I only heard the music of my mind,  
I did not notice Love waiting  
Patient and kind,  
I danced with a phantom lover  
I think we both were blind.

Love tapped on my door  
But I was in the garden out the back,  
I scarcely heard the knock  
Nothing would distract.  
I was minding the berries  
And shooing the kittens  
Inhaling roses and lilies  
And watering persimmons  
I was happy in my garden and undisturbed  
And so love promised  
To return another day –

I may have heard it rustle  
As it wandered away,  
I rather wished  
I had asked it to stay.

## In the Kitchen



All kitchens  
Are crazy -  
The onions make you weep  
The knives cut you quick  
A hot flame  
Will tame your skin  
Steam scorches  
Without a trace  
The juice of lemons  
Burns the tender flesh  
Of a careless cook  
Fiery peppers finish the job -  
Steal your breath  
In a stinging second.  
Smoke, like love, blinds and distracts -  
Ice has its own effects.

Beware,  
The kitchen is not as  
Benign  
As it appears  
The path to fine cuisine  
Is fraught with fears  
More than one chef  
Has fled in tears.

## Valentine's Day

Acts of love  
Are not what they appear -  
For I have risen above  
And know what I have seen.

Acts of love  
Are warfare with a velvet glove  
But the heart is so gallant,  
It barely quivers  
As it dies  
Absorbing a wound  
So deep -  
There is no blood.

Like a body without a soul  
The heart beats alone -  
A witless tattoo  
The dance of death  
Long after love has been laid to rest.

## The Night We Never Met



The night we never met  
I was not upset.  
True, I did wait and was loathe to give up hope  
But I know you and suspect only saving the planet  
Could hold you from me.

So, I waited a bit  
As I do every night and every morning and every day  
Since I first began to believe  
You would come for me -  
I hear you saying: Come, meet me half way.  
It doesn't work like the movies  
And you chuckle in the breeze.

I *do* venture out but whatever distance I go  
Seems not the road you are on -  
Or maybe it's just that you're already gone,  
Or it could simply be I took the high road  
And you took the one that runs parallel.  
Therein lies the difference between heaven and hell

Do you know, some days, I am almost shy to tell,  
I can only fall asleep thinking you are near.  
Something hovers - I prefer it to be love rather than fear  
That we might miss again -  
Another night I'll wait in vain  
Ponder the stars,  
Have my tears compete with the rain

Here's what I'll do: to save worn shoes and keep dreams pure.  
Here's what I plan, in case Plan One does not pan out.

I will keep a light in the window  
A candle scented with mango and a flower in mellow hue.  
I will dance in the flickering shadows  
And put on music and call it 'our song'.



When I grow too tired or doubt preys on this simple heart  
When faith falters by the light of the moon  
When my voice is as solitary as a single loon  
When I get to wondering  
About waiting for you.

## Appaloosa



Last night I dreamt of the range again -

But first – before I saw the terrain  
There were cave walls,  
Like ancient times,  
Hieroglyphics of dancing ponies  
And a shaman with a story to tell

Then suddenly the wall disappeared  
And the figures came to life.  
Dancing in the fire glow  
Drum beat steps,  
Leather and feathers and heat  
Like stick-like statues turning real.  
And what was rustic art and still  
Became the world  
I knew to remember.  
I breathed the smoke and sweet sage  
And joined the dance.

A man in buckskin and cambric shirt  
Approached me  
Tried to steal a kiss  
I turned away  
Cupped my mouth -  
Told him:  
Another man waits  
I cannot lie with you.

And just as quick  
My frock turned to mane  
My legs took a gait  
I became Appaloosa  
Docile, brave, untethered, loyal girl  
Tail blowing in the wind  
I took to a trail  
That knew my name.  
Just barely feeling  
Kiss of rein

And then it all goes blank.

## Derailement



What a falling there was there -  
When I mistook your artless gaze for ardent care.  
More smitten by the field than by fact,  
Instinct took intellect by the reins  
And would not look back.  
What a falling there was there –

Tender she may be,  
But the heart rides roughshod  
With great glee.  
Where is the compassion  
In all this?  
What is the point  
Of Love's near miss?

When the brain took the high road  
And the heart took the dare  
What a falling there was there.

## The Late News

The other night  
Just after the news  
And just before bed  
He caught her  
Staring into space.  
“Hey”, he said,  
“What are you thinking about?”  
It took a second,  
And then she said,  
“Nothing”.  
“Sure?”  
“Sure.”

But her eyes glistened  
A touch too bright,  
But then again,  
It could just have been the light.

## Lovers

Lovers lie  
Between the sheets  
Between the lines -  
In that look that's not quite eye to eye -

Those kisses turn cold,  
When the pulse turns dim  
And the air is thick with  
What might have been.  
When feeling less  
Is a mortal sin.  
They lie -  
In a heartbeat  
To save their skin

Well,

Love is like that,  
When it pretends to be  
And that soul mate that you find  
Is but facsimile.  
Lovers lie -  
When they feel less  
When the heat is gone  
From their lover's caress.

I would tell you the truth, darlin'  
And leave out the rest.  
I could say I love you  
But a lie works best.

## Parks of Autumn



By October  
The parks of summer  
Turn exotic.  
And by November,  
Moody, sparse.  
A baby swing  
Creaks and dips in the wind.  
Winter's chill  
Slinks into the park  
Changing summer's warmth and giggles  
Into premature dark.

## Open Market, All Seasonal



October -  
The pumpkins gave way  
To spruce and pine  
Bit the dust  
But not without a fight.  
Pumpkin pulp  
Mashed jack o'lantern grins  
Bitter and grinning,  
Rebellious to the last  
Seems ages ago.

The trees heralded in the new season  
With an elegant jauntiness,  
Their spicy scent  
Shamed Paris perfume  
But now they too tumble into the New Year  
Jade coloured, fallen foot soldiers of Noel.

There is no season now,  
Save the one called In-between -  
Grey white, dreary.

Oh what I wouldn't do  
For a spot of colour!  
A daffodil's happy petals -  
Unfolding yellow velvet,  
Or a blush of rhubarb  
To chase the slush.  
Those hues of spring  
I miss so much.  
Yearn to clutch,  
And love so well.



## Cardiac Ward at Toronto's Children's Hospital



Small hearts  
That beat with a strange tattoo  
Have a way of wrenching  
The hearts around them too.

For those who can discern  
An odd rhythm,  
Soft murmur,  
The resonance is unmistakable  
A poignant imperfection  
A little less than true.

Heart of my heart -  
Tiny reflection of my own  
Reminder of my own fragility  
In a small beating echo of my soul.

## Take the East Bound Train, Track Nine



Headline: Sabbatical  
“Mother of three escapes - “  
Takes train  
To other burg  
Lives two days  
In a hotel  
Virtually unnoticed by staff  
(Housekeeping remarks on  
Excess consumption of bath beads)  
Eats off hours  
Sleeps in  
Checks out  
Catches cab  
To station  
Nabs number 87, Coach  
Bound Anywhere, West  
Returns home -  
Arrival duly noted by authorities.

## Ink and Blood Lines



I am a pen  
Humanised  
But a pen  
Nonetheless.  
God's choice  
Or Devil's own -  
Transcribing  
The divine and the damned.

My heart is paper,  
My mind is quill.  
With each breath I take  
I can feel the  
Sharp, scratchy imprint  
Of words,  
Like a tattoo  
Indelibly  
Etched  
On my heart,  
Where the blood  
Flows like ink.

## Angry Men in the Kitchen

Angry men  
Angry men -  
Wish I had a nickel  
For each one  
That has come into my kitchen.  
Feverish eyes,  
Clenched hands  
They get in the brew, the broth, the bread.

Anger alters the seasoning  
Ups the ante and the salt.  
Anger sours the wine -  
Bitters the sweet  
Makes acid of honey

Passion's only welcome  
When it's not hell bent.  
But all those angry men  
I've loved and lost or left -  
How they've messed the stew and the soup  
How they've stirred my heart and my head

The kitchen never sleeps -  
It's best you learn  
To tame the heat.  
It's a careless cook who leaves  
The stove unattended  
The fire still lit -  
At the mercy of the match  
Of some angry man.

## Father's Days

---

My father sat at the head  
I sat beside my father.  
Year in,  
Year out,  
Probably seconds  
In love's harsh terms.

I can recall  
The neat, pristine style  
Of his etiquette  
Preferred his food,  
Plain, but well-prepared  
Carefully trimmed.  
"Lamb chops", he dismissed,  
"Too much work for too little meat"  
A condiment gourmet -  
Fiery horseradish  
Hotter still, Dijon.  
Only memory is more potent.

My father sat at the head  
Though master of us none  
In service to the last.  
I sat beside my father  
My seat of honour  
From the past.

## Phone Call



My brother called the other day  
Said he's had words  
With some kind guy  
From the town  
A bad exchange  
"Could have killed him"  
He tells me.  
"Yeah, I know"

"No, really, I could have killed him  
I was that mad - I have that much rage  
One day, it will make me do something"  
It will get the best of me, I know.

Truth is  
Everyone has rage.  
Yet there are far less murders  
Then you'd think  
Given the rage per capita quota.

Later -  
I hear an old song on the kitchen radio -  
Don't remember the title  
But the tune, the words  
Gets me at the bone,  
Breaks me at the knees.  
Remind me of stuff  
Gone by.  
Stuff lost, forgotten  
Abandoned bits of myself  
Wrapped in music,  
Sadder than I care to admit.

I want to call my brother  
And tell him:  
Thing is,  
It's not rage that does you in,  
It's regret.  
It's regret that kills  
In a laser stroke

Doesn't even leave a mark.

## Senses

The man who loves  
The woman who tends the garden  
Lives with lavender  
In his bed  
Fresh herbs upon his pillow  
A riot of wildflowers  
Dance, like music  
In his eyes.  
At night  
He harvests not lovage or laurel  
But her.

The man who loves  
The woman who tends the loom  
Never feels winter's chill  
His skin is warmed  
By the passion of her craft  
He lies with her  
In fresh silk and cotton  
And wraps her in the fabric  
Of his soul.

But the man who loves the baker -  
The woman who tends the fire -  
He lives with her  
In his mouth.  
Her flesh,  
Like warm, new bread  
Fills him  
Yet makes him hunger  
Time and time  
Yet time again.



## Never Been There



From where I stood  
 I thought that was love  
 But having never been there before,  
 It would seem I'm no judge

From where I stood,  
 It seemed like a true thing  
 And though I tried,  
 I never saw the sleight of hand  
 Nor gentlest pull of strings.

Just what *was* that thing  
 That flew by me?  
 That captured my soul  
 But set my heart free.

If it was something else  
 You'd think I could tell.  
 But it had all the right looks, sight, touch and smell.

Turns out -  
 Just like that old song goes,  
 I don't really know much about love after all,  
 But thought even I would know  
 What was and was not  
 All for show.

It is like those outer ripples on the pond  
 Long after a stone's been thrown  
 Or those hazy rings that frost the moon.  
 That thing I thought was core -  
 That seemed like love to me

How could I have possibly known  
 It was but love's periphery.

## Commuters I

He says  
He says  
The city has a job.  
And she says  
She says  
She's longing  
For the country.  
And he says,  
He says,  
The city  
Is where life is.  
And she says,  
She says,  
She wants to  
Bake her own bread.

He tells her  
He can't move now  
The city is an ally.  
And she cries  
She sighs,  
She says  
It's spring now  
And the trees  
Are budding.  
And he says -  
She's dreaming,  
The city will renew -  
What is but a brook  
In the country  
Becomes a river  
In the town.

## Commuters II

A day in transit  
For a night in heaven  
I peddle my soul  
While you receive peddlers  
Both of us  
Waiting for 5 pm  
When the city closes up -  
And the night closes in.  
I light the way  
With heart light.  
You meet me halfway  
For the day,  
Begins with the night,  
And night is but  
The passage home.

Ah,  
Commuters,  
Miles away,  
Miles a day  
Away from home.

## In My Grandmother's Blind Eyes



In my grandmother's blind eyes  
I have seen  
The paths of many before.  
The wandering of others  
Somehow stops with us.  
Here, in this house,  
We settle.  
And for a time,  
The endless trek ceases.

I help her with the candles  
And turn her to face the light of the Sabbath,  
A glow she can sense,  
But cannot see.

My grandmother's face  
Reflects the light of gold and mellow  
Reflects tradition  
Generations old, almost timeless.

Her voice rises and falls,  
With the intones of prayer.  
It is the music  
That will haunt and comfort me forever  
And I listen,  
As she sings songs  
That are heard,  
Far away from Russia.

## The Blue and White Bowls



The other day  
I took out the soup bowls  
I got at some Pier I.  
The blue-and-white ones  
Stamped with the words:  
“Made in the People’s Republic of China”

They never chip  
These fragile small bowls,  
Yet oceans away  
A whole people  
Shatter and fragment,  
And break in  
So many small pieces.

(1989 reference Tianannen Square)

## Hard Wired



She  
Makes much  
Over naught -  
Can go on ad infinum  
And a day.  
Finds meaning  
In the inconsequential  
Analyses  
Every stranger's conversation  
And cannot,  
With any incentive,  
Learn to leave  
Well enough  
Well alone.

He  
Cannot find it  
If you glued it  
To his nose.  
Gets lost  
On familiar roads.  
Is a stranger  
To the contents  
Of his own fridge.  
Panics at the phrase  
"Let's talk"  
And somehow,  
Has full license  
To be sullen  
At whim.

Only something  
As volatile  
As hormones  
Could connect  
Genes that would  
Otherwise repel.  
Only something  
As fathomless  
As love  
Could wrought heaven  
From sheer hell.

## Old Lovers



Old lovers  
Stand between us  
Like ghosts  
Of Intimacies Past.

More potent  
Than any future dalliance  
Are old lovers,  
Who wait in the wings,  
And Memory,  
Like an yearning understudy,  
Impatiently anticipates  
One last embrace.



## November Poem

Well this is how it goes, love.

Once  
You held me close  
Your heartbeat lulled me to sleep  
And you said:  
Sleep, love  
I'll keep watch.  
There is a difference between  
Rest and respite  
There is a difference  
Between refuge and flight.

I slept -  
But you abandoned your post  
I lay unguarded in the night.  
A thief came in  
And rifled through my heart.

I do not miss the things he took  
I only hurt where he touched and burned.

I stand watch for myself now -  
I watch the ships that pass.  
I do not hail them  
Nor entreat them come to shore.  
When I close my eyes,  
The dreams do not visit  
And so I do not hear your heartbeat anymore

And that is how it goes, love.

## Unspent Desire

I sometimes think  
There's a place  
Where unspent desire  
Hides itself,  
Like unspoken thoughts,  
Unused potential,  
And wishes that never were.

I think there must  
Be a place  
For things like that -  
Things you can't use  
But won't throw away.  
I think unspent desire  
Must be kept  
With all the other dreams  
And unrealised moments,  
Nestled there,  
Among the very sweetest  
Of fantasies,

Sometimes I think  
Unspent desire  
Never really dies  
But lives,  
In the receptive  
Recesses of memory,  
Waiting for moments  
Of retrieval and touch -  
Short exposures into life.

## Just in Case



In my heart I have a 'just in case' kit for dire times  
 When emergency moods suddenly creep in –  
 Or those moments between and you're suddenly unsure –

This special 'just in case' kit  
 Is meant for you,  
 For whatever may occur  
 That leaves you lost or uncertain and doubting what is.

It's for all the times we've had cross words  
 Especially the ones we couldn't take back.  
 Or had a precious moment too small to catch,  
 Or an impasse too big to make right,  
 Or sighs that went unexplained,  
 Or silly moments for which there was still blame.

Just in case -

For the times you thought  
 I didn't hear you, or see you, or honour something special,  
 Or I missed a baseball game or tossed out the wrong advice.  
 Or for all those small wrongs I or we  
 Just couldn't set right –

Well,

Just in case - you ever wonder  
 How much love there was and is  
 And what it's all about -

Just open the 'just in case' special kit  
 And dispel any doubt  
 Know I love you always...in all ways -  
 Just in case.

## Rookie Spring



Mud smell in the park,  
Cut with sun and new leather  
Eau de spring, no less.  
Here, in little league's private  
Field of dreams,  
A wavery line of boys  
Stands at the ready.  
Minor hearts pump  
With major yearning.

“Okay boys, you’re here to have fun  
Got it?  
Now play ball.”

Right.  
Sure.

Anything less than  
The hit  
The catch  
The out  
Means squat.  
Little league nothing -  
These boys are going to the Show.

## Summer Coach, Post Season

The diamond that  
 Dominated our summer  
 Is empty now,  
 But for some  
 Phantom basemen,  
 Throwing 'round the horn  
 "Pitch it over the plate"  
 "Elbow up"  
 "Nice swing"  
 And,  
 "Good eye, good eye"  
 Good game, nice hit.

Ice creams all around,  
 The night we rallied big time  
 And came back twelve/eleven.  
 A black Rawlings mitt  
 Left on the bench,  
 An empty Gatorade bottle nearby  
 Someone's watch,  
 Someone's glasses,  
 The last hand-sewn baseball

Indian summer strolled in -  
 Emptied the dugout,  
 Faster than that  
 Last play-off game  
 Our closer choked -  
 They fled.

Hockey try-outs  
 On Rink #3  
 And a new pair of Bauer's  
 Was all it took  
 To turn the boys of summer  
 Into men of ice.

## Spring Fever



It's not one month  
Over any other  
And it can find and touch you  
As easily,  
In May as September  
Taking you unawares  
Drawing you along  
To places  
Wisely left unexplored.  
To feelings best  
Left dormant,  
Safe.

Spring fever  
Is secret-filled  
Unbearably tempting,  
Primed with promise  
Rife with regret

Sometimes it's best  
To turn away  
Consider the rain  
Ponder the flowers,  
That peek through the mud  
Feign anything,  
But commit.  
Say anything  
But admit -  
Do anything,  
But submit  
To spring.

## Spring Too Soon



Contrary to popular belief..  
Spring can come too soon.  
Winter holds us  
In a grip and a mood  
That's hard to shed -  
Tenacious as a titan,  
That loathes to relinquish March

Sometimes we become  
Soul mates of the frost -  
Habituated to the chill  
Even the warmth from within  
Chased by winter's kill.

First perhaps,  
For a change of heart  
Then maybe,  
A change of seasons.

## Swan Song



She goes to the pond she knows  
And waits.  
She is used to the way it flows  
Ever so soft - barely a ripple.  
The pond is quiet  
With ghostly echoes  
A siren's sad refrain,  
That gently rebukes  
That long-necked myth of love.

The swan does not know,  
Why this pond beckons  
Habits of the heart  
Are beyond her ken.  
She waits -  
For it is her wont and will.  
She startles and hears a sound -  
But everywhere she looks,

The water is still.



## After the Fact or For Someone



Morning comes  
 And I think of you,  
 How the mind does so race  
 And the heart follows suit -  
 And all it takes,  
 Are those thoughts of you.

Love never lies,  
 Though it may not linger.  
 Love is proud,  
 But never acts on pride

Love may be oh-so-patient  
 But will never wait.  
 Love knows no right time,  
 But chooses the season.  
 Never hears denial,  
 Nor listens to reason.  
 Love observes no ties,  
 Is only loyal to Truth.  
 It honours the fool,  
 And humbles the wise

Love does not ask for permission  
 Not listen to admonition  
 Love does not ask  
 A by-your-leave.  
 It does not always shut the door  
 When it leaves.  
 It goes its own way  
 Sometimes even -  
 When asked to stay.

So chastise me all you want,  
 What I have cannot be touched,  
 Even if in the end  
 It did not count for much.

## New Year's Day

I have been to the wall and back  
Bounced off its boards,  
And broken my back.  
I have shed tears galore,  
Shrieked at God in indignation  
Ignored the sun and the stars,  
And cursed creation.

I have been to the wall and back.  
I have finally learned,  
Not to reach over, above, or beyond  
But to dig deep and deeper,  
To find where I sleep,  
Which dreams are keepers.  
To see the horizon  
In the prisms of my own tears.  
To capture my restless, hurt heart  
Like a mustang horse  
Who yearns for love  
Beneath a saddle of fear

I have been to the wall and back  
Only to discover the well -  
Heard my name in its echo  
Found my soul in its spell –

I have birthed a fountain  
In that well!  
I have tasted the waters,  
Both salted and sweet,  
I have turned my back on the fire,  
Forgiven the flames,  
Endured the heat.  
Quelled the fever,  
Murmured *yes!* to Love  
Held out my hand to the fallen dove.

I have cast my wish in a pebble's throw  
On the quiet, listening surface  
Of my own private well.

## After the Fact



When you're done  
Protesting me -  
And your heart  
Opens to what  
Your eyes did see.  
When you're done  
Turning away,  
When you should cleave -  
It's my ardent wish  
I'll hear you call  
Not be bitter,  
Nor choose to recall  
When you spurned  
Both Love and me,  
Dismissing us for whims of chance  
For what was instead, destiny.

## Theme Song



You are that old song  
I play on the piano,  
The one I try out  
Each time,  
I reacquaint myself with the keys.

I test the silence,  
With something I know.  
But you are that song  
That lifts from the notes.  
Wraps itself,  
Around each bar of music.

I never get the song  
The same twice -  
And yet,  
Never forget,  
Where to find the chords  
The special cadence of notes.

You are that song  
I play  
The moment I sit down  
At a strange piano.  
I test the silence  
With something I know -  
For the sound of you  
Is like a nostalgic refrain  
And the feel of you,  
Is a song that never quits -  
Won't leave the touch of my hands

I'm ready to begin again  
Try afresh, flexing hands  
That longs for the keys.

## What Falls Away

What will you remember of me?  
When I walk another path  
And you are too far to see  
Will you remember the things we shared?  
The sound and feel of my laugh,  
That way I set you free ?  
Or the parts you did not see  
What will you remember of me?

What will you remember of me,  
The moments large and still,  
Or more so the seconds that passed  
Without a count,  
Recorded by the heart,  
In cut measure time.  
Narrowed by small talk  
Corralled by manners,  
Sieved like gold,  
And lost to the stream.

What will you remember of me?  
When we take up other history  
Will you remember I knew you once?  
And still said goodbye.  
Will you remember I loved you some?  
When there was no reason why.

What will you remember  
Of that tiny, quick, sad place of *we* ?

But you are that old song  
That lifts itself  
Around every crevice,  
Of every cadence,  
In every bar of music.  
And I'm helpless  
With memory  
And bound to a song.

## No Buns Today

If you miff the baker  
There'll be no more buns.  
Out the window -  
The scones and cakes will fly -  
And you can say goodbye to rolls and pie

If you bother the baker -  
The dough might forget to rise,  
The bread, if baked, will be too dry  
The wheat fields will tremble,  
And rain will chase the sky

If you upset the baker,  
Intentional or perhaps just careless,  
All that's good and pure  
And simply wants to be,  
Will contract and forget to yield.  
Harvests, both inside and out,  
Will dwindle or will burn  
What's left will have scorched edges,  
And for better baking days, you'll yearn.

If you trespass or otherwise are remiss  
The baker and her floury spirits  
Will conspire a murky tryst -  
Where ambrosia should have ruled,  
You'll find but stale crumbs  
Barely fit for birds or beast  
What you will inherit is an empty bread basket,  
Where there should have been a feast.



## Heart Song



This is the song of a heart that has come home.

It sets out a light  
In the window,  
And a pretty table for two.  
There is soup on the range  
And perfume on a thin pretty ledge  
Garlands on the pillow,  
Roses that stay -  
Everything is fresh and warm and real and true.  
Everything flickers and darts in delight,  
Brimming, flooding  
In a river of right

In the air there is music  
It doesn't cease -  
Wordless, lyrical theme song  
Put into me  
When first I came.

I remember now  
Just how it goes,  
But always a duet,  
And so the song froze.

Now lips are warmed with kisses  
Your embrace is the tune's refrain  
I taste the waltz begin.

This is the song of a heart that is home.

## Prelude to a Kiss or How to Fall in Love in 30 Seconds



In tango, there exists in an unmentioned, but implicitly understood, Thirty Second Rule. It is the quintessential litmus test of chemistry and compatibility that is achingly accurate and all so simple. It goes like this:

Someone asks you to dance and you say yes. As you say yes, you observe how he takes your hand and if he leads you to the dance floor, as a prince would, escorting a swan. You notice as he stands still to face you, as he opens his arms in invitation and as he invites you to the foyer of his chest and the house of...him.

Your right palm slips against his, floating like a feather into a unique cradle of fit. Your left hand settles onto his shoulder (if his height is near yours) or his bicep if he is taller. An unbreathed sigh settles you into the moment and then you wait.

The music starts and you notice if he starts to dance at the first note or if he pauses, hovers and listens as the music seeps into him. You observe if he chooses the moment, the exact scuffed space of the dance floor, that one aperture between the other couples, before taking that first step, taking you, with him. Is he a man that can wait for what he wants? Does he hear his own song or does he join the chorus of other men who move in unison like a collective tango fleet on that first note? You are in his embrace and now you are set to motion.

The two of you are a ship; he is the captain and you are precious cargo but you have no way of knowing, until the first wind fills those sails, if he is able to navigate whatsoever. You put more trust in the wind than in the man who shepherds it.

The music extends and he adjusts and all of him now comes towards you in a sensation of new male person. You are close enough to see the hair at his collar bone, his shave, his sideburns and texture of his skin. You can see his Adam's apple and pulse of his breath and telltale tattoo of his heart no matter how impassive he seems. You preen, quietly – knowing it comes partly from the mandate ahead of him and partly from the very nearness of you.

You breathe in gently and test the air between you, subtly inhaling or cologne

or laundry soap or starch or perhaps simply the scent of a foreign male who is as intimate as the men you date are at three days, four café lattes in. Delicately, you test the scent to see if you can live with it for three minutes of the dance of longer than that, determining if he is someone to dance with or a man you could make love to. Not that you will but it is this primal thing we do.

You can hear his breath and feel his heartbeat and you wonder if he hears your own heart race; you try and still it. You are a tango woman and know how the game is played; like a tango geisha, you disclose nothing for the dance really begins before the first bar.

In turn you sense male confidence battling with his own clamor. Some men tremble slightly, their hands are cold and clammy but you never register or transmit the knowledge. You can't know if they are nervous because of the challenge ahead of them – it is all sublime. You feel him assessing and accepting the shape of your body, your breasts where they touch his chest in an intimacy that is undeclared as it is tacit. No one says a word but instead, stay silent and befuddled and calm – all at once.

Some men may smile politely without meeting your eyes. To do more is to commit and no one will commit more than this before the 30 Seconds Rule is passed. To smile is to dilute the tension and the mystique. To smile and meet someone's eyes is to make a pronouncement you cannot yet offer.

You wait.

The dance begins. All bets are off and all notions are simply this: can he lead me? Can I trust this male human being to guide me on the floor, take me on a tango adventure and bring me back? Will he protect me from the other dancers; the hard shoulders of men leading other women; the dagger points of other women's shoes that can piece my instep if he doesn't take care? Does he know what I like or can he see what I can do? Is his style gentle or quick; does he fill in each bar of music with steps or is he confident enough to wait - wait for the music, his mood and wait *for* me – to let me catch up or follow or attune myself. Does he dance *with* me and for me or for the other men to be impressed? Does he gloss over mistakes and chuckle low and gallantly or does he titch his tongue in exasperation – whether it be towards me or himself?

How *present* is this man?

All this data is swirling and tabulating 10 seconds into the dance; you are

barely out of the tango harbor.

You adjust your touch on his right hand side and move your hips to contour his, aligning the distance and discrepancies between height and body type. You catch a tiny piece of second wind. Now he is no longer just a man, or a stranger. Instead you have moved into his country and passed from visiting diplomat to native. He gave you a passport when he asked you to dance.

The music plays on. You relax ever so slightly. You notice he *can* lead, and *can* take care of you. You don't have to worry. You are in safe hands, if not yet tango's Promised Land. If he is nervous but also new at tango, you change roles. Instead of him guiding you, you guide him in leading you. You accept him, as is, and go somewhat limp, verging on acquiescent but maintaining a vestige of spine - so he can find the energy and force of direction that works for him without battling your energy. You determine, even *that*, even if he is a novice, if he has tango potential. If so, you give yourself over to his tutoring as he leads you. One day, some day, he might be a contender and that is worthy of both patience and respect. You respond to the potential that might be there and while the tension eases the dynamics stay.

Twenty seconds pass and you understand his moves. What a surprise was but seconds before is now a pace and a habit and your intuition keeps evolving at pace.

He repeats a series of steps and what was experimental - a series of doled commands and responses, now takes on finesse. You respond well and completely; you feel him relax as he sees you read him. He tries something else and you follow in a swathe. There's not even a fumble until he introduces a turn you could not anticipate. You jockey again for position, adjusting *just* that much more; maybe letting him closer or moving with familiarity to better ground. With newly set intention, the dance continues and an aura of deliberation coats each move. You no longer know where your perfume and his scent start and stop; you no longer notice and difference in height and the line of his body meet the borderlines of your own.

The thirty second mark nears. The consensus is he can guide you; you are safe and more so, you are accepted. There is a fit. You feel his relief and pleasure behind the impassive expression which hardly matters. You know that *he* knows you are a match. And now you are both in tango's inner circle.

Such thirty second dances birth a set of two, three, more dances. You

unconsciously file him in the back recesses of your Tango Partners A list. You have found someone to fall in love with for three dances or maybe more. With him, you can feel safely seduced. Tango is the ultimate safe sex and consummate, mini romance. You can, if you care to, imagine, for as many bars of music as you need, he is The One. Or you can imagine the one you truly love and truly desire but is not in your life (they have left or not yet appeared), is instead there, partnering you. But always, underneath the tango foreplay is a frontier of a man you could perhaps fall in love with but won't. It is enough you are finally in the dock of the bay of connection. This feeling lasts as long as the music plays; it is all you want and need.

The dance ends. He nods, less smile this time but his eyes meet yours instead. Tango hosannas. His slight bow and thanks is his way of saying, *"Another time – we will dance again. Make no mistake. I will remember you"*. Like thieves sharing magic, it is all sotto voce and sotto emotion. So sweet it is almost caress that makes your heart arch. There is no hurry. You will see him again and pray/hope/wish the magic repeats in another thirty-second romance that teases your spirit and slakes your soul.

You try not to watch who else he dances with and if he holds her quite the same way or shares precisely the same touch. Besides, even he never returns or does return and the same magic might vanish, there is always another tango boat on the way.

And that is how you fall in love in thirty seconds.

## How to Fall in Love



To fall in love, you must put away everything you have learned up to now. You must put away pride, wisdom, street smarts, and sophistication. You may keep dignity, patience, instinct and an open spirit. Relax your body, unclench your hands and open your palms. Look up to the stars and let snowflakes fall on your face without intercepting them.

Wait.

First, you must find someone or let them find you. In fact, it is better if they find you and you find them but this is only possible if you both walk backwards and into each other. But you must start unaware and without expectations. If you are waiting and ready, you will not fall in love. You might find romance but you will not fall in love.

The next thing you must do is to think of yourself as a house with all the doors and windows open. The other person will appear as sunshine that sneaks its way in and sends unexpected warmth upon you. You will bask in this delight. You will feel golden, perfect and radiant. You might even forget who you were, where you've been and everything else around you.

But then, it will change. That wonderful sunshine will become alternately rain and wind; and then cool breezes with topsy-turvy gusts that upset your furniture, inside and out, and send your pictures on the walls all askew. You will want so very much to close the windows and slam the doors of your house; slap your hands together in that brisk motion that says, 'enough of this nonsense'. You might feel fearful and in turn and in time, cover up that fear with the wicked of all tonics: rationalization.

You might be so good at this that the rationalizations of things that are *really* a blessing and a gift, will seem as the truth. In fact, the opposite is so. The rationalizations are the lies - the truth will seem, well, unseemly. But no matter - if you go this route and forget this counsel, there is little to be done.

You might habitually protest the weather - shut it out and forget that it's possible that in mere minutes, or hours or days, that same annoying wind with its fearsome gusts can turn back into that sunshine that first warmed and

beguiled you.

So I urge you to become a student of the weather and simply watch it unfold. Welcome the rain and wind. Know that it will not harm you and besides, it will soon pass. If you can manage to keep the door and windows open, the rain will dry up, leaving only winsome brooks that are cheery and sweet. Those winds will settle, leaving only puffs of air to make your wind chimes sing merrily. And sooner than you think, you can look out again and see those golden rays which first caught you with their stream of light and warmth. You might marvel how it all changes all around you while you have sat still.

If you *can* sit still.

Then there comes a hard part. You will relax and get used to the changing weather. You will learn to take to the wind and rain and not notice as much. Instead, happily, you will focus on that sun. That sun will become glorious. It will become larger than your own open house. And just when you get to that point and are revelling in this light, a big cloud will come. This cloud might stay and obliterate that sun which you have grown to love so well. It will stay so long until you know this is not a change in the weather. It is indeed, the new landscape and a painful reality of the heart.

At first, you will hope the sun will return but as the days turn into borderless chunks of time, you will know that is unlikely. Dullness might set in.

Now this is odd - because clearly, this is not simply weather changes but a permanent state of affairs but still, you will have that same urge to shut the windows and close the door. Now, there is no rain, snow, or wind to make you do that but still - you will want to take a hammer and nails and hammer down shut every crevice that sun or any light might creep through.

You might even close the shutters around your heart. I urge you not to. If you are telling the truth about wanting to fall in love, this is how it is done:

Take the glow from your own heart and your own truth. Set it in each window sill.

Make candles of your faith. Take the glitter from that plant called hope and the twinkle from the dreams you cannot give up. Adorn your home with these things. In time, you will not miss that sunshine you grew to love. The light will go from inside, from your own hearth, to the outside. You will not need those

flippant rays you first experienced and learned to rely on. That warmth that starts from within and stays.

One day, you might even look out again - because after all, you are still, in your heart of hearts, a student of weather. You might see another home - similarly lit. That might be an indication of another full, strong, open house - the only possible match for your own abode. It might be a place worth visiting. It might be a place to go to.

They say falling in love is wonderful. It is. But at first it will be scary and it might not always work out. You might only taste romance which, as lovely as it is, is simply love's residue. To fall in love you have to be smart but naive. Hope against hope. Hold your heart high, proud, but unfettered. Celebrate its scars. Cry until you do not know what to do anymore. Sleep. Dream. Wait and be ready. There is always more weather. There is more sun. Put the hammer and nails away. Turn your palms open and upwards.

And that is how you fall in love.



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