

Courtship

a collection of love poems that led us here

for Julia
by Michael

Gnosis

What is being born between us
was here before and will be again.
Is this poetry or mysticism? Neither
if your whole body doesn't shiver,
molting under this slow embrace—
neither if you don't stagger though
you haven't drunk wine—neither
if you don't puddle into primal
soup in love's cocoon—neither
if the sun never catches the moon.
Your watch won't work here, so
measure time by the quality of kisses.

What is being born between us
is a way to embody the spirit
as it leaps into different dimensions
like a child playing hopscotch.
Your phone, forget it. Your money,
meaningless. Here, the currency
costs the idea of where your life
was going. Welcome to the frontier.
You must map your heart
for treasure, to know what is
being born between us.

Enough

You never know
when the sun will rise
in a way that breaks you.

One, pure glance—one
whiff from the wine shop
that puts the sun to sleep
every happy hour—enough!

Let's surrender to the rhythm
of surprise. Abandon all
we know, so we rise
in such unspeakable bliss
we'll have to start a new religion
to begin to describe it, or
a poet may find a pause
more profound than words.

Interpretations

There is no right way
to read the silence created
after our eyes collide.

Each definition holds
true -- yet defining
filters out connections

we cannot deny when sleep
won't come. You are more
than the ability to accept.

Come. Go. Call. Renounce.
Love knows no distance
and melts with glacial

patience. My father, drunk
in Heaven, knows your name.
My mother compares my wives

to you. Generations will sing
about this sacred expression,
this song and all the others

that hit the heart where it
makes nectar. Why wall up
the garden when it is not

a garden? What grows
in this rainforest has the seeds
to rebirth the planet. Why

define love with convention
when each interpretation
holds only one piece

of life's infinite patchwork?
The only thing self-evident pivots
between desire and acceptance.

A Few, New Chords

The day when the Northern hemisphere borrows sun
from the South you must stretch yourself to catch

its hymn. Microtones unlock the cells medicine,
but can only be heard in an open field. To play her

you have to learn a few, new chords and increase
your capacity to embody bliss. The chords hide

at the cusp of magic and music theory, blushing
from the feeling sparked by the sound of light.

So much of your life will seem lost—the salty grief,
the bitter days—that you cannot push forward

until you hear her bare feet winding their way
where all the detours and main roads meet.

Now pour your higher nature into this melody,
inhabit the rising body of this new form.

Gathering Stones from the Ocean

Meet me in the water. We travelled
the length of life to be here. Apart
we aren't whole, a shock to the system
called *us*. But here we are, dear, with
no demands wedged against us. Stumbling
through pilgrimage, I fumble a few
wet stones. The breeze opens my senses
as cold water stings our bare feet.
Your hand on my shoulder calms
a hungry jungle.

If you don't tell
a healing story within a year of trauma,
you drown in swampy despair. You can
filter it all in the Pacific. Here, the soft
light of wonder erases fear.

Come with me
into the lungs of the blue earth, rest in
its undulation, the romance of sun, moon,
and the sway of the unseen. This place
has been on slow simmer since
the climate stabilized. Feel how
real love unlocks the hidden garden
where the physical and mystical planes
meet.

Kiss me long enough to taste
eternity. Look at this beautiful sea stone.
Can we take it home?

Music Toward a Marriage

Wound taut, like the high
string of a harp, you ripple
at the thought of touch. The room
itself invites whole-bodied wonder,
sound waves wash away the idle
seaweed of passing thought. Your
voice, melody of my death
and resurrection, dances in places
I have to move. Pleasure floods
the moment. Such alchemy
comfort junkies will never know.
Ecstasy enjoys being a bitch
for the sake of it. I'm letting
the low note drag, the chronic
hum of creation. You cannot deny
such harmony. Still, the desire
for noise over this musical silence
persists, a pleasant bypass,
an escape, an attempt to control
fate, as if external stimulus
can drown the inner ear. This love,
this messy bliss, this spilling over
of senses into one another—the point
where streams flow into the same ocean.
I think your thoughts, open my mouth
and hear your voice. Once songlines
merge, the tune plays by heart.
The music never stops. We ripple.

Swimming

I'm too skinny to contain
the infinite ocean of love.
How do these senses fit
inside the human form? Bees
and birds and whales and epic
tales converge within. Over
there, a street fight. Here,
a monastery. A drug deal. Earth
school. All turns to tone.
Your love becomes a songbook,
a psalter containing a map home.
There's work to be done--
the harmony that creates a third
note when two voices blend
takes practice. And we, like Gods,
break out laughing at how drunk
the joy of making feels. I tried
to quit loving you, but couldn't
fight nature. This meeting was
arranged hundreds of years ago
and the urge for union has been
building even longer. So, forgive me.
I'm too skinny to withstand this wave,
and there is no choice. Swim.

Taste This

We're just this far from the forest
when a good woman gauged love
by her share of the hunt.

The primal act of having another
raise a fork to your mouth
brings your body to a blush.

Grilled pork, a civilized return
to our roots, opens three worlds:
the tribal, the urbane, the eternal.

Life feeds on life. Artistry matters.
Something as unexpected as reddening skin
gives a glimpse into the ocean

of your eyes. Inside, a fire
on an undiscovered island says
this is home, taste this, feast.

Falling Asleep While Julia Sings

What love does to a body
changes the atmosphere. You say
I live in your heart, literally.
So I swim this crimson sea,
body rippling on the cusp
of magic, a day so bright
its birth song reaches me here.
Too tired to float, drowning
feels right until nature blinks.
You kiss my neck. I feel
smiling through the veil of sleep.
Your voice lifts my spirit body.
I'm breathing under water now.
You know. I don't have to explain.
Quit smiling. How did you
find your way here, too? I must
have left the gate open. Are we
swimming or dancing? I know this
place, so do you. We've reached
our bed in the heart we share.

Distance

You've gone to the mountains
for Christmas. The actual distance
measures almost 500 miles,
but real distance does not exist.
All lovers live inside one another,
in the same nest where death's
curtain has worn so sheer you feel
the divide dissolve. The animal.
The human. The divine. Three in one.
When you sense your lover's mood
from far away, you fall for it--
the significance of the story. How,
not that long ago in the history
of the planet, one birth changes
the world. Hope tastes like cranberry.

Early Spring

A gate inside you unlocks.
In this garden a bird
makes a nest. Plants, insects,
fruit trees and animals
create a soundscape.
Kiss me again: infinity.
We have to send this one back.
The night falls. Dogs need
walking. Regret tastes like
salt. Remorse tastes like
sulfur. This experience
smells like garlic and butter.
We walk into another life
empty handed. Nothing really
changes. Seven billion stars
still shine. Be gentle when
old beliefs fall apart.
I shouldn't say this,
but it's okay. We make
a key each time we really
listen to each other's body.
We can meet here again.

This Hum

This hum builds between us,
the same way two rivers
join salty water. As red as
your lips after we kiss too long,
passion for you flies through
street lights. What fools try
to organize the flow of people?
They must not enjoy love's detours --
that time you got lost driving
down the street you grew up on
overtaken by a glance or lingering
remark. Only such willing, capable
souls can swim here. Don't ask
how or why. Science or Philosophy
might be able to talk about union,
but they can't embody it, can't trust
their lover will catch the wave
with a receptive ear, then offer
a naked syllable keyed into
what is with the precision
of a tuning fork that works
in two worlds at once. Some
believe only four directions
exist: North, South, East, West.
But there is another direction,
another dimension, inside. Here,
intimacy is the native tongue,
mercy erases all debt with a dance
or a curl up on the floor cry, in
the hive where hums are born.

Every Exit An Entrance

We hide. We hiss, fly away or test how mortal
a union can be. With artesian precision
we summon the dark arts of language
to poison a phrase. After we resume
our natural pace, the amour sloughs off.
We wonder what died, or, instead of death,
we examine a shed skin, another emanation
of the gooey layer. Bathe me in tears ...
tempt me, again. I may run away for a while.
Every time my clenched fist opens I am holding
a green seed, the heart we share.
We've broken through so many metaphors:
veils, walls, skins and soil. In this moment
nothing is hidden. There is nothing to hide
here. In love's funhouse running leads to the same spot,
fighting appears as silly as a thirsty child
crying into a cup of milk. Wave after wave
of seen and unseen energies mirror back
our yearning, accepting eyes. This is
the cradle where colors are born, where
root and branch fuse. The silent embrace
that was happening the whole time.