

For Grace

By Ernest Lowe

Songs of her light

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A Judge wearing tennis shoes married Grace and me in his home overlooking the Pacific. That was July 14, 1956 or Bastille Day. Now in 2014—57 years later, she has died, with Tibetan Buddhist Prayer Flags waving her into the light. Here are a few of the poems I wrote for her through the years. Her deep presence in loving kindness runs through them, along with her smiles and laughter.

Someone else

In 2010 Grace asked me to make a book of all the poems I'd written to her and for her through the years. There were none from our early years so I wrote this to fill that empty space.

Those early poems
 false starts
so many lines crossed out
 by that stuttering child
 so afraid
he can't say anything right
 so afraid
 to feel your great love
to reflect its tone and texture.

*"Sorry, you must think
 I'm someone else,
 M'am."*

Finally I learned to see you
 with my heart
then, my dear,
 I could finish our poems.

2010

My Lady's name . . .

My Lady's name is Grace.
She walks along behind the tide,
throwing stranded starfish
back into the water.
She talks with clams
before she cooks them.
She's kind that way.
I think I'll stick around
and light her fires.

1970, Nerja, Spain

I am

she is
the sea,
and I'm roses
and roses.
She knows
about me.
I forget
what I know.

I am
she is
the vase
full
with my flowers,
her roses and roses.

She asks me
to sing
a song of her light.

I am silent
as a rose-colored
rose
waiting to feel
once again
how

I am
she is
the sea.

1977

Grace and I wrote Jellies in December 1995 at the Monterey Aquarium

Jellies

*"This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds.
To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at
the movements of a dance."*

The Buddha, as quoted by Sogyal Rinpoche

Tiny clear Crystal Jellies,
Purple-striped Jellies
moving with slow, undulating grace
through bands of light and darkness
and outside the glass, a young couple,
faces close, share this dance.

Comb Jellies, delicate diamond spheres,
release their long fronds
to gather plankton.
An older woman remarks
to no one in particular,
"That's so amazing! You know, they have no brains, no hearts."
Her life too, from egg to grave,
would move with such grace
if I had eyes of long vision.

Sea Nettles,
saffron diaphragms, pulsing -
plumes and threads
swirling through the water
as they slowly descend.

A father tell his young kids
about the painful stings
of these jewels,
but the youngest
dances smiling
in a circle,
her coat overhead as a mantle
fingers undulating in the air,
quietly singing,
*"I'm a jelly baby."
"I'm a jelly baby."*

Just another sunset poem

My Lady saw
that open space to the west
under the storm clouds
still hanging over us.

Come
she said,
it'll be a special sunset.
She drove Martha and me
down to the bay shore
to see the grayblack clouds
an intense deep red
growing from within.

Then
as though that magnificence
were somehow insufficient
a thunderstorm broke loose.
Bolts of lightning
ran across the horizon
from San Bruno Mountain
to Mount Tam
striking down to Earth
all along that arc
of deep textured sunset.

The awe of the twilight time
that followed
that was nearly forty years ago.
The thunder still sounds in my ears.
My eyes are still amazed
by the lightning cutting across
the dark red of the clouds.

My Lady's name is Grace.

One day closer

So many old pleasures!

Have we lost the capacity or the whim
to be a little wild and sensuous
to wander out along unknown roads
without a map?

Are we really that old?

Too old to leave
the electronic tentacles of our
cable cellphone internet broadband walkman
infested nest?

If we broke out of our habitual lives

created a new life together
in this seventy-seventh year of our lives
what would we lose?
What would we risk?

Our fortune is certainly safe

invested in memories and mementos
in images and feelings
scattered across our fifty five years together
and apart.

Today we are one day closer to death.

Isn't that occasion
for joyful improvisation
opening our eyes
full of one another
surrendering the sad old projection of
Maybe I'm doing it wrong.

Come into the garden

let the morning air chill our skins
then warm ourselves
flesh upon flesh
in the cave of our bed.

January 5, 2010

Sonoma Fog Light

I never managed to find a way
for you and me to live at the ocean
that and a thousand other dreams
I never managed to realize.

So now I drive up Highway One
through foggy landscapes—
you always loved them the best—
gathering the images of lupin in seas of grass
cedars and cypresses, sheep and cows,
barns and tacky vacation homes
all soft in their gray splendor.

I stop and walk along the Sonoma shore
pausing for you at the edge.
The sun breaks through the winter fog
shining the waves breaking up around black rocks
shimmering the water's backwash
into flashing electric pulses
rushing to me through the milky air.

I know you'd know that vision
like you seeing your own true self in a mirror
like me looking into your clear bright eyes.

January 2014

Not here

If I put this poem into an envelope
address it to you in the Bardos
will Jaime find a way to get it to you?
Or perhaps I should drop it in a creek
flowing down to the sea . . .

After a busy dry day I break down
leaning against the kitchen sink
shaking, seeing you not here, not here
not here wearing your flowery silk robe
not here, smiling as I hand you half a honey tangerine.
Not here . . .

How can I possibly say, "*Not here*"
when I see across our round oak table
(Uncl'n Alan's gift in 1963)
your flowery red silk robe
a red box full of Tibetan mandalas
your books -- *Peace is Every Step*
Exploring the Labyrinth
Pema's No Time to Lose

There's Hanuman leaping into the air
carrying the Universe to safety
(you brought him to me from China in 1980).
On the bookshelf slender Ganesh
dances to remove obstacles
dances to bless new beginnings.

March 2014

