



Vessels of Love at Gleebooks

Valentine's Day Weekend
Saturday 12 – 14 February 2022

Vessels of Love Poems

Richard James Allen

Scene from a Marriage
Actually, Love

Carol Jenkins

Flirt
Valentine

Lou Steer

The Blood Rose
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Mark Tredinnick

Sonnet in October
Tropicbird

Scene from a Marriage

by Richard James Allen

you are my context
without you
i'm a picture
wandering out
of its frame
a blotch of colours
a mess of sky

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The Air Dolphin Brigade, Paper Bark Press 1995
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Actually, Love

by Richard James Allen

is the only thing that does last,
beyond the karmic astral space junk,
drifting like detritus
from lifetime to lifetime,
until it is finally worn into nothingness.

Love travels beyond lifetimes.
It doesn't just go on for eternity.

It is eternity.

Desire may be its currency,
and sex may be its paydirt,
but love is the purpose of time.

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The short story of you and I (UWAP, 2019)
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Flirt

Did we flirt? I can't remember. Fall?
We're falling still.

Patient? Well waiting doesn't qualify.
People told me so much about you,

and really the only time I saw you truly
was in the pocket mirror of others' eyes

and scribbled notes, then that brief and sinking
rapture of being you, a glancing, giddy undertow.

Take for granted doesn't even start to say.
Still I know I'd be nothing, nothing, without you.

my crush, my love, my aorta, my superior vena cava
my beloved, my dearling, my darkling, my weekday,

my weekend, my small beer, my whatever-ails-you,
my new shoe and its other half, my hot bath

my first, my last, my cup of tea, my breath,
my heart, my honey bunny, my meadow grass,

my in-too-deep, my stolen sleep, my funny,
my favourite dish, my delight, my day and night,

my content, my close-the-door, my flora,
my dizzy height, my laid low, my elephant in the closet,

my chew-the-fat, my pack rat, my one true,
my skip-a-beat, my take-a-seat, my come-here-often

my heart's alarum, my holy ghost, my little devil
my green-eyed one, my fine face, my fellow spoon

my eyes-grow-dim, my him, my hum-along, my song
my mr wrong, my turn, my garden-by-the-sea

my part of me, my ketch, my hawk, my diplomat,
my all-of-that, my time-on-earth, my home & hearth,

my here, my now, my caramelo, my bed fellow,
my light, my laugh, my daft thing, my that thing with wings

my world-go-round, my dog-my-thoughts, my could do worse
my nothing better, my love letter, my hot tomato,

my finders keepers, my first edition, my still-in-print,
my type, my tea and toast, my ever after, my res ipsa loquitur,

my give and take, my gave and took, my pride and broom,
my sing-in-tune, my cloud nine, my parking fine,

my cross that bears me, my ode to autumn, my spring rooster,
my personal pronoun, my prima facie, my turn-the-cheek,

my decade spanner, my monkey wrench, my kitchen's bench,
my seas-gang-dry, my Spanish rain, my can't complain, my cup's saucer,

my hot water, my ritornello, my squireling, my systole, my hyperbole,
my moonbeam's mcswine, my cherry wine.

THE BLOOD ROSE

He called me the blood rose
as I danced in the Eastern style with a Persian singer
in the back of the anarchist bookshop -
to the sweet sad strains of the dobro,
played by another man
who asked me to go outside with him -
after telling me about the voices in his head.

I kept dancing and he called me the blood rose.
Everything else he said was in Spanish -
No comprendo amigo, feliz cumpleaños -
He had the mouth of a poet and the eyes of a madman
And he called me the blood rose.
How could I not fall in love
Even for just five minutes?

The petals of my skin are soft like the rose,
but you must break its thorns to touch me.
The petals of the rose are the colour of blood,
like my lips, like your fingertips,
torn and pricked, as you push
all the way to my heart.

I am the blood rose.
Pluck me.

VALENTINE

What do I really know of love?
I have spent more than half my life
with the same person. Everything else I write about
is nothing but speculation and memory. But who wants to
listen to tales of the kitchen sink?
Passion and high drama fuel the art that I deliver.

I can barely remember
how it all began, in that ratty old share house,
You, with your bushranger's beard and your silence,
you saw your chance and took it.
(Always the quiet ones).

A trip to the country in your brother's old van,
with a bottle of Bundaberg rum,
to listen to the Emmanuel brothers rock hard in the heat.
We didn't wash for three days. I remember,
when we finally showered, the black dirt
of the paddocks swirling away,
leaving our bare bodies shining like angels.

Now it's our daughter's turn
to go on country drives with her young man,
while we wait for her in the home we've made from scratch.
You snooze on the lounge while I paint my nails,
in the flickering light of the television.
Gunshots. The bad guy gets it. Like always.

(You can rely on it.)

The dog at my feet. It's raining outside.
In here, with you, it's warm.

Sonnet in October

For Jodie

THIS AFTERNOON is who you are, my love:
The tender disposition of the clouds,
The stillness of the roosting air, the sounds
The evening borrows from the diamond dove,

The recollection in dissolving day
Of all the pain endured, the gladness come
Into our lives, the way the sun has gone
Into the quiet house of dusk to say

A word or two of thanks. The koel cants
A small complaint and cockatoo takes all
Old grief and paints it blue. And evening falls
On all the days before we had a chance

To love, and scents them sweet like all the nights
To come—the stars that blaze, the rivers' quiet.

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Mark Tredinnick

Tropicbird

WE SAT together on the stone. The forest below us
Steamed after rain, and I knew this was your idea
Of paradise. A place like this, you said to me,

You either leave, or you never leave.

And as I climbed down the scarp into the trees
Of this abated wilderness, a tropicbird dropped
From the canopy and played her wings across my face

Like sheet lightning across the night. Only cooler

Than that. And her tail, softer than rain, as she fell,
And longer than love, felt like a sumptuous enactment
Of the first slow moves in a long seduction of farewell.

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A Beginner's Guide, forthcoming this year, Birdfish
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Vessels of Love
A message to the reader

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