

1.

Love is strange

Love is strange, it's said.

Strange as clinging kitten claws,
as breaking chalk, a blinding light,
a sudden shudder-sigh,
or midnight cravings.

Strange as never-quite-closed doors,
as Superman & Kryptonite,
and halfway open flies,
& drunken ravings.

Strange as sex followed by snores,
as toilet seats standing upright
or razors blunted by
bikini shaving.

Strange as adults at Star Wars,
as stalagmites & hematite,
as cancer multiplies,
headstone engravings.

Love is strange. It's said.

2. SCARVES

She raised one hand to touch her cheek.

Her fingers felt the cotton's neat-stitched edge, and hesitated - grasped the dark soft fullness of the cloth -

unwound, unwound, and draped her scarf upon a stick,
her pirate flag.

A silent statue of a girl.

An eminent old uncle gawped,
a guard marched up, locked eyes
then *nonchalantly* strode off,
ignoring her.

And in the towns & villages

a hundred girls held headscarves high to say -
We are the Girls of Revolution Street
Tehran. We say: we wear, or don't.
Our hijab choice.

3. Full Moon

Full plate moon smiles down on me

The stewed clouds glitter

On a half eaten evening sky

Saturated tea pot day has retired

And the purple throw has covered the stars

Hungry trees whisper in the breeze

Wiley foxes hunt for leftovers

And wild eyed cats escape their territories

Fallen Apple's thud in the orchard

Awakening burrowing moles

Rats scurry in the barns clever but undesirable

While we go about our life

Unaware of God's microscope studying our behaviour

4. Celebrating A Death

A new rain falls upon the earth,
rain of tears from happy eyes,
no more storm in bone or blood,
soft stream at cancer's demise.

That bane of bone and blood and organ,
what once tore down with drenching rage,
now to be far memory.
behold festive great events,
glad hearts congratulate,
sorrow replaced with exultation,
smiles no longer fade.

Planetary jubilee,
across this orb once held hostage,
triumph cheered across boundaries.

Raise a glass, have a dance,
celebrate the healing rain.

5.

The Cathedral of St Nicholas

perches high on the peth*,
twisting lane below.
Old cobbles, round and smooth
have paved the way
for countless footsteps.

Pilgrim Street, All Hallows Lane—
such names reflect the call
to pay homage.
Processions would end
with prayers at Amen corner.

Inside, organ pipes glint.
An angel trumpets
atop the rood screen
bugle in hand.
Yellow chrysanthemums
flickering candles
light up the interior

as a service is held
to admit choristers, proud
in their robes of red and white.

They process from the nave
gather for photographs
all ages, all backgrounds.

Outside
motorcycles rev up
sirens blare—
discordant chorus of city life.

6. Not the last meeting

'This is not the last meeting'

Goes the lyrics of a song
At every nook and turning
I keep hearing, all along

My heartstrings whimpering,
I let out a moan
He beckons, whispering
"I'm here, You're not alone!"

"I will never fade away
I feel your feelings, all
I know well what you want
I will never let you fall"

The voices in my ears,
Familiar and sweet
Work on me like fire
In my aching desire to meet

I hope, I weep, I ponder
Will I ever touch the voice?
I reach out to try my luck
But, I hear him rejoice!

And when I can't take it anymore
"This is not the last", he says
My heart, churning at the core
I hum his song in daze

But now I know I am blessed
I know who is he!
He sure loves me, as he said
'Just a soul being nice to me

A soul being nice to me.

7

Trees of Heaven

Those are tough trees
growing in slums.

With no need of rich soil
or pruning, they rise
in abandoned lots.

These are trees that
survive rubbish, rodents
noxious chemicals.

Not easily cut down,
they stand against
gaunt tenements.

Climbing skyward,
delicate palm leaves
flourish flowering pods.

Trees of Heaven give
children glimpses of bright
emerald each morning.

Stars play peek-a-boo
between their branches
through long nights.

Who has said a taste of
paradise is only for the rich?

8.

REFLECTION

Time to reflect on a personal endurance,
to which I saw no end.
Mind battered with emotions, body fragile to pain.
A slow burn, death of heart and mind,
to now recover from that sea of hell.
Left vulnerable, heart bled to a living disbelief,
to a man who dare enter my life?
Opened my love to an insecure place.

Time to reflect on a personal endurance.
My lost self to find and re-build.
Trust broken, heart given, soul lost.
Waves of past takes me off guard.
I opened slowly my heart, love cautiously given.
Fool me, let go to his love, let him in.
Picking up my own pieces, some point to feel whole.
Cautious of love, letting go, to trust once more.

Time to reflect on a personal endurance.
Too precious is love to give away.
Keep safe within, no harm can take place.
Be light, run wild, live my life.
In time, my time, my love I may share.
No race to pace, nor time to define.
A healing of me. No man's baggage drowning me.

9.



He's not like me.

He doesn't have what I have.

No wardrobe full of clothes.

He only has what he wears,

This is tattered, ragged and old.

He doesn't watch T.V like me,

Sat cosy around the fire.

Instead he is on the streets

Watching his days expire.

He doesn't have 3 meals a day

With his family around a table

He sits and begs at the corner shop,



To buy food to make him stable.

So what makes him different to me?

Everyone is human after all.

People should all stick together,

And catch when they stumble or fall.

10.

THE LAST VINDALOO

how many vindaloos have
you made for me

over these 20 years

how many gobis
have i gobbled

how many chickens got to
reincarnate

via your tandoori
and my

grangousiers
maw

where i saw
kama

and now

you're
going away

i think i've stayed
here

just for my saturday pigouts
and sunday

takeaways

i just got your family begats
figured out

not only did your warm
my chili sauce

my heart

i will miss you dear friends
don't be surprised
if i turn up
in india

looking for dear mr singh

and

a

bhang lassi

11. I Need To Buy A Father

I need to buy a father
does anyone know where I can find one?
I looked everywhere but I could not be able to buy one for my boy
I need to buy a father
he must be the happiest one,
the caring one and the strongest one.
I need to buy a father for my boy
The one who teaches him how to face difficulties in life.
The one who is there when he scores goals
The one who is proud of my boy conquers,
I need to buy a father for my boy.
They told me that in commerce everything is available, everything it is sold
I would pay plenty of money to find the perfect one
The one who will be there, chatting until late, when my boy will fall in love
and the one who sings out with him.
So I ask you if you see one, please let me know
because I need to buy a father for my boy.

12.

Kindness

Today I met someone with an illness
I'm hoping they don't find a cure
I'm hoping it spreads to the end of the earth
But it won't I just know that, I'm sure

It comes and it goes in so many strange ways
It happens and is sometimes a surprise
By an action, a look or a gesture
You can't see as it's sometimes disguised

It's not hard to get, it's just out there
Don't fight it just do what you can
No medicine is needed to end it
Let it get every woman and man

For Kindness, I hope there's no cure.
I'm hoping it spreads far and wide
And whenever you do a good deed for someone
You can always look up with great pride.

A novel attempt

I wonder aloud of how many bookmarks
librarians discover in the middle of a book
someone didn't care to complete
You didn't read me

You said maybe we aren't on the same page anymore
We were never even in the same book
We're shelves apart in different libraries
In separate cities
Divided by seas
You never wanted to understand me

You know me
Maybe better than anyone
Just from reading the synopsis
And you dove right in at chapter 1
Pouring over pages
Craving more
A real Paige turner

But you never find the time to read these days
And things were a little slow in chapter two
It was just too much to commit to a book of that size
Especially one you knew wouldn't be a best-seller

And so I sat by your bedside Waiting for those oh so scarce quiet nights
When you might pick up
And lose yourself again for a little while
But you only lose interest
Past its return date
Our book left unfinished
But you swore you'd get back to it
Pages dog eared incase some young librarian
Should try to add your bookmark to her collection
Maybe you'll pick me back up some day

Once upon a time I dreamed of Hugo awards
But now

My spine all bent and broken
Finger tips flick past my scratched off lettering
As I sit on the shelf
I contemplate translating my text into foreign tongues
Broaden my horizons
I often wished I could be a travel book
But they are all pictures and no words
Glossy pages and price tags
That's not me
I bound myself
Reused, recycled, environmentally friendly, dull and lifeless beige
My protective cover long since lost to the space down the back of your bed

I'm sorry for your disappointment
I would tell you to not judge a book by its cover
But why wouldn't you?
Isn't that the point of the cover?

Poem about love.....

When I'm with you time flies by
But when I'm without thy, I sigh
You're the blood in thy veins
Otherwise with out thy, my blood would be mud

How the quarter pounders are so cheap
And you don't slaughter foreign sheep
Makes you the McFlurry in my day
And a contactless card to pay

Though I must say if I'm with thy for too long
It'll rot thy teeth
And I'll end up looking like Kieth
So for now It's non-preservative beef

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Flora and Fauna

Men who taste like Purple Orchids
Rinse their teeth in chilled white wine
Read about What Katy Did
And sni the Rose and Columbine
Men who smile like Common Ragwort
Hide their secret wives in trees
Reason like an controvert
And dwell on strange hypotheses
Men who smell like Shady Horsetail
Smoke rings around their cigareles
Raise eyebrows like a sliding scale
And never speak to surageles
Men who dream of Shrubby Cinquefoil
Fill their boots with \$elds of grass
Spend evenings raking smooth their topsoil
See starlight through their looking glass
Men who laugh like Cuckoo%owers
Raise their hats to smile at hares
Make small bouquets from cauli%owers
And drink their beer from jardinières

16

THE KITE DANCES

Inside the dark and hot box feeling
damaged.

Wind blowing the lid open and set free from
the box.

Swirling and zig-zagging high up in the sky.
Floating on its tummy way up high doing
loop the loop.

Feeling delighted, happy, excited and free.

I have never seen a kite feeling happy.

Flying back into the box to go to sleep.

Time (for a change)

Rushing around from A to B,
Doing the things that make me, me.
Writing down lists and ticking off jobs,
My husband he waits for a crumb like a dog.

In my marriage a ghost, I am there but not present.
His vows he took then but has grown to resent.
A husband who's life I have selfishly wasted,
Who deserves the gold but only got plated.

When I was younger I pitied women too busy
To take time for themselves, who really is she?
Mother, worker, cook, cleaner
Where has she gone? when's the last time you'd seen her?

Now it is me who's been swallowed by duty
Too tired from work to be anything fruity.
I look in the mirror; the sparkle has gone
I'm in there somewhere; the girl I was once.

But find her I must; it's been far too long
My husband I must; join in his sweet song.
For life's not a game; we're only here once
It would be such a shame to only get bronze.

What will I have at the end of my list?
All tasks complete but my face in a twist.
If no changes are made, a life of regret
Will be laid before me on my death-bed.

For life is for living and not just existing
I'm not just a mam or a cook in the kitchen.
I'm a woman with talents and a glint in her eye
At the end, no regrets - I will end on a high!

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Makeup Mirror

Getting out of bed at the start of the day,
Into the shower she washes away the grey,
Temperate water spraying down to her feet,
Experiencing this sensation is a real treat.

Bath towel round the body skin is now dry,
Back to the bedroom a hairdryer is nearby,
Happily parks herself at the dressing table,
Looking into a vanity mirror as she is able.

Rummaging on the top and in the draws,
Looking for a powder to cover any flaws,
Feeling foam, liquid, mousse and cream,
Applying them gives a glow and a dream.

Blusher gives a pleasant focus on her face,
Lipsticks and eyeliners illustrate a grace,
Moods during the day are full of emotion,
Mixing perfumes for a body odour potion.

It's not about beauty or any imperfections,
Looking her best making the right selections,
Ready for the day confident with herself,
Appearing noble, lovely and in good health.

To get her through day right up to bed time,
There is makeup at hand that is not a crime,
Scattered around the home in every room,
Buried in her handbag, purse and costume.

In the home or outside wearing aromatic musk,
Maquillage gives a belief from dawn till dusk,
Cosmetics are worn in a shroud at life's end,
An embalmer primes the body ready to send.

Under her makeup is a look of many faces,
Whatever the mood there's no airs and graces,
Gazing at images creates a calm of being upbeat,
Owning a makeup mirror gives a cosmetic treat.

Point of Origin

This is the street
where you once lived,
held as a child
in the neighbourhood
you loved to be.

Green leaves
unfurled each spring
like new-born
twitching fingers,
as you aged too.

Growing away
from these memories,
you lived on streets
which memory
no longer serves.

No fixed address
is freedom,
but mind still
wheels its way
back to that street.

Point of origin
stands as symbol,
a haven created over
time, though the hour
hand never stops.

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The Transporter

There were many ferry boats
Carried workmen across the river
Then along came a visionary
With a plan he could deliver

The plan to build a structure
A bridge of some renown
It had to give free passage
To ships that pass up and down

First they built the giant legs
Towering more than two hundred feet
On top of them a carriage way
To make the bridge complete

The next idea was a bogie
From which they hung some wires
Connected to the platform below
It really was inspired

It travels backward and forward
Between each landing stage
Carrying traffic and pedestrians
Once the fare is paid

A hundred years of service
It has stood the test of time
A beautiful iconic masterpiece
Still looks really fine

It is a Middlesbrough marvel
Showing our bridge-builders skill
It seems its been there forever
And I think it always will

Some Days and Some Nights

Some crawl out or fall out or stride out or slide out of bed.
Some bang out or blast out or step out or check out the door.
Some smile in or pile in or creep in or cringe into work.
Some work hard or shirk hard or text fast or stress out the day.
Some flirt out or work out or view out or booze out the night.
Then dive in and climb in and step in and tread in
to dreams.

Some dream they are falling, plunging, bawling,
Appalling lack of earth beneath their feet.

Some dream they're stark naked, bare assed, x-rated,
Averted faces as they scurry down the street.

Some dream they are flying, fluttering, rising,
Swimming the sky's latent heat,

Some dream they are dwarfed insignificant ants,
Mesmerised, horror-bound, as the tidal wave comes thundering down.

Some dream they are kissing, clinching, bodice-ripping
Their celeb idol - sweetly completely indiscrete.

Some dream they are fleeing hideous unbeings,
Escaping, retreating, peeing and screaming,
Beating the swiftest retreat.

Then some crawl out or fall out or stride out or slide out of bed.
Then some may say - thank God for the day
And some may say -
dream on.

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Web

The offline time
had a different measurement.

Condemned to loneliness on the Web,
they try
to find understanding
with people sometimes even without faces.
Just a few nice sentences
enough to increase confidence in

- a woman?
- a man?
- the written words?

Condemned to loneliness on the Web,
they believe what they see on the screen.

Clicking –
I am not a robot
– is the only identity check.

Where are the moments
where without machines

- a Human understood a Human?

There Should Be Wings

There should be wings of a hundred birds
to churn this scorch with breeze
to dry sweat
shade glare
to soothe the ache
of a post-noon day

There should be varied
and a thousand greens
with all between
of innumerable trees
till the blue of sky
blends their deference

And the river heaves its way along
ever on
eternal mission of earth
and...

Heaven-- sure misses so much some days
There cool remote
transcended as it be
Replete with rains
and relief of clouds
The Angelus in the distance....
with its affluent affinity for air

Revelers leave their party debris
for those making sure
not a sign is left....
We sort and fold, collapse and pack

Somehow between chairs, tables
cans and bottles, assorted trash

They come--

crouch on the levee
wander and stare
aimless amid tall dry weeds
Inhabit a bench, a moment--
Wild
filtering through our fabrication
Wind to dissipate our purpose
Trees invading abandoned fields

“The poor you have with you always”

“I’m not drunk,”
she drunkenly proclaims
to no one
except maybe....

Leaning over her opened beer
seated on bench adorably painted
with joyful hands

Who fondly held or hoped for her?
Before....
days of dirt troweled a shadow
in the sweat between her breasts
Filthy tank that barely covers
derelict denial

How they find themselves established
as we make to leave
WE, of our homes and cars and jobs
and plans of escape

They--

of always

Adolescent Afternoon

I lay on the ground below
the curved hips of the hills at sunset
The aperture of my eyes, my sex, my eyes
and the narrow escape
of mind from body

I am ten again
and they're calling me falsy
"Big tits, no bra!"
Shoving them into the lockers
of Holy Name's pool
"My eyes? Brown. My hair? Brown.
My body? Lean and leave me alone!
or I'll punch your lights out!"
All I want is to run bare to the waist
sell lemonade and pretend... pretend....

Mom—is mortified
but not 'cause I'm banned from the stupid pool

"This is for something you haven't got yet"
says the matron of the fitting room
Bones in a bathing suit?
What I haven't got?
or they haven't got
Will never get—
in their worlds of curtained cubicles
Cause of death:
Strangulation by measuring tape

In my plaid two-piece
sunburned shoulders, wind-wild hair
I built a fortress of sand and stones

by heartfelt sweat
--to endure
at this juncture— earthbound

But she shook the blanket
at the tide's full reach
peppered the air
with an epoch
Clouds darkening
the wind-torqued sea

Finding my flip-flops, we...
trudged off...
into the changing...changing

On the Way Home from a Water Park

Felt so good!
Wind and the highway!
Did anyone see me?
...beautiful with the hope of love?
Neck getting sunburned
Hair ripping sunlight
as that semi pressed and passed us
standin' still as a school bus
And we signaled 'im for the horn
pulling our fists down on the air
Ya know, we were celebrating!
his response in kind!

Sweaty kids snoozed
stuck to naugahide
nodding under ball caps
Slumped over souvenirs

Happiness marooned in the third seat

Not too bad here, really. They've made it a bit more homely now; put a few of me little nicknacks up and that photo of me and your dad standing outside the house. And they've got the little clock going; I don't know why they've stopped it chiming, but it's nice just to sit here and hear it ticking.

They seem to be spraying all the time. They've got these little cans and it's psss...psss...psss...all over the place. I say, no, that's not the proper way to dust, but it's just water off a duck's back. I think they think I'm an interfering old so-and-so.

It's nice and cosy in here. Sometimes so hot, I have to take me cardie off. It's a bit too hot, really, but you can't seem to turn it down. The telly's working all right, but I fall asleep in front of Corrie every night. I don't know why I'm so tired. I don't do anything to make me tired.

It's all right in here, really. It's not like home, but you can't expect that; there's no place like home. It's a shame you can't just stay in your room all day, though. I suppose they want you to mix.

They take you downstairs for your dinner. I don't have much; no one does. Then they sit you in an easy chair in the TV room. There's always something on, but no one's watching. I just nod off again.

Have to go now; they'll be here in a minute, with me Horlicks and tablets. Could you do something for me, Stephen? That little statue of Mary by the side of me bed; could you bring it in for me? No hurry; you don't have to make a special trip. I'm all right here, you know.

And while you're there, just put the fire on for a bit, will you, just to keep it aired. Don't want the damp getting in.

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A short story about this poem: it symbolises my journey starting in a country where I was judged and pushed down, to England, where I have been finally able to discover myself. The journey was not easy but I had strong ambition to overcome every single obstacle that came in my way. The poem is called "Blank papers".

Blank papers

A round table with blank papers on it,
A dark moon hovering over feelings lit,
Broken dreams flowing from here to the unknown,
And no chance for survival, that land has shown.
I walked the streets in my night of sorrows,
Looking at empty faces 'cause their minds are narrow.
They looked back at me with anger and hate.
A wide smile on their face, but inside, they wanted me dead.
No chance I had but I was looking at the sky...
"So beautiful, so bright, so kind you are,
Mother Nature, give me wings so I can fly!"
It took madness, tears and dreams of good.
I was hungry and I was thirsty, I did what I could.
I gathered wishes and wings of gold,
And next thing I knew, I was on the top of my world.

A round table with written papers on it,
A bright moon floating over feelings lit.