

POEMS

**A Collection
(1995 – 2012)**

George Alexander

One morning hour middle week, while all the world at work did meet
I stood outside a pub I knew, and pondered on the sorry few
Within, so early sipping brew. I did not mean to mock their fate
Or chastise or with oaths berate;

But just to think.

To stand in wonder how such men so low could sink.

When suddenly it seemed to me – but no, I thought, it can not be.

Deep within the musty place, shrouded by the smoke and haze

I saw, by Jove, I saw his face. A shadow of his former self,

So haggard and with woe engulfed

He looked to die.

So pure the pathos of it all, I nearly cried.

I spied the street from right to left; the coast was clear and so I stepped

Across the threshold of the den and through its bowels my way did wend

With trepidation to my friend. ‘Good God!’ I hissed, ‘My mate pray tell
What horror was it you befell!

What base Defect

Has humbled You who once commanded such Respect?’

In anguish then, I seized his arm. A shout rang out, ‘Cause him no harm!’

The publican who gave alarm, and in a moment ‘round me swarmed

Ruffians fierce and fully armed. Said they, ‘He’s drunk for fifty days

‘But not a word he ever says.

‘Remove your hand

‘Or else you’ll meet your Maker! We command!’

My sweet life passed before my eyes hurtling toward a sure demise

When lo! my friend gave out a moan, bestirred himself, in sorrow groaned

And then with sombre voice intoned: ‘My sorry tale I’ll now declare.’

The crowd drew back! My life was spared.

‘You made him speak!’

The publican now shedding tears: ‘Here, have a drink!’

There, upon the mountainside, a steep incline above the sea,
We sat upon some ancient stones and shared a meal of bread and cheese.
About us wandered all his goats, the gentle bells around their throats
Providing music and some warning should a predator approach. And wine,

And then contented smoke, and not a single word we spoke
As, balanced on our wooden staffs, we marched once more upon the path
That'd take us to a sheltered place, where safely we could rest our heads
Before the sun took back her light and day succumbed to moonless night.

Now, installed in penthouse suite, lording over teeming streets,
I sink into my leather chair to lunch on egg and caviar.
Around me prowls my pack of wolves, their chirping phones and hi-tech tools
The conduit to the cash they make as fools from money separate. And whisky,

Whores, and fine cigars, and barroom boasts of love and war
Till, wobbling off our wooden stools, we weave our way to waiting cars
That whisk us off to large estates, where wives neglected long of late
Exact revenge by dawn's first light for broken hearts and barren nights.

Send this message to the shepherd high upon the wind swept rock.
Tell him I am fast returning! I will help him tend his flock.
On the jetty by the lighthouse in a fortnight I'll alight.
Let him know I pray he'll meet me. Quickly, man! I sail tonight!

Ah, the tender years of youth, the tears of puppy love;
Adolescence through pubescence while abandoned from above.
The brain by flesh besotted, the soul in flames engulfed.
The higher mental faculties surrender to the south.

Three decades dash upon the waves and lo! look who appears.
Adonis with a larger skull! (and wider waist, I fear).
A softer, more insightful bloke, less quick with sharp retort;
But slower off the mark, you'll note, more prone to come up short.

A fragile moment 'tis for him, to be alone again.
An older chap who's lost some knack at playing young men's games.
Who steals a glance toward Heaven as he mounts once more his steed,
Brave Knight in tarnished armour yet, in valiant quest of thee.

Many things I planned to be when youth and vigour surged through me.
I placed no boundary on my thought
And seldom had the slightest doubt
That if I squandered not my time and utilized my fertile mind
A mark on all mankind I'd make
As merchant prince, or head of state.

Amusing, no? to reminisce, of life before things went amiss.
A voyager with faulty map,
A trail blazed in a *cul-de-sac*.
A maze of crossroads east and west; decisions based on lore or guess
Delivered me to port on time
But Chance had sailed, I'd always find.

Take heart, tho'! See how blades of grass have risen where I cast the seed.
My garden hosts a flock of birds,
A dozing dog, a jet black squirrel;
From throne disguised as folding chair, resplendent in the noonday glare
I, Monarch, tend to my estate
In step with Nature's stately gait.

A toast, then! Pour the liquid clear, distilled from herbs afar and near;
Then add to it a cube of ice
And shake them twice, that will suffice
To turn the tincture pearly white; an ancient vice, O pure delight!
With little wonders, simple things
Like these I live a life serene.

Bomb them to be friends!
Shell them to be lovers!
Concuss them into warm embrace, a splendour in the rubble!
Cauterize their sorry souls of misanthropic blight
With tubes of high explosives steered by tiny shafts of light.’
He slammed his draught upon the bar and fiercely looked about.
‘Am I the only man in here who dares to voice his doubt?
’Tis madness, this!’ he thundered. ‘The children we now hurt
Tomorrow shall strike back at us, at nation, kin and hearth.’

A telling moment, that it was. I thought his words had won the day
Until a stranger from the gloom emerged, drank deep, and had his say:

‘Hold steady mate. Appreciate, that
Being meek and turning cheek
Appeals in theory, but in fact surrenders good to evil’s wrath;
For Love alone can’t vanquish hate, nor Right wrong’s legions decimate.
Save Force decides the desperate fight,
’Tis Might that summons day or night!’
He drew a sign upon his breast. ‘My soul shan’t weary, heart won’t rest
Til soul and sinew strike as one, till all good men in unison
Rise up against the evil ones. I swear it, men! Who’s with me, then?’

A *tour de force* which left us hoarse with cries of ‘Aye!’ and ‘Count me in!’
‘Til each voice stuck, by Horror struck: the bell rung by the publican!
(And mark my words, ‘twas not half ten.)

Our hearts he froze. ‘This pub is closed.
Drink up! Eat up! then off ye go.
Like blind men trailing one with sight, like children pipe and soldiers fife
You’ve let yourselves be led tonight.’ He sighed. ‘The blokes who spoke,
I know them both; and each believes quite fervently
In what he preached and promised thee.
Says one, at Mercy throw thyself. God’s Will, says two, is help yourself.
The Truth, I trust, lies in between, depending on the time, the scene, and schemes
That Man has set afoot. Some days we’ll love, and others, shoot.

‘But here’s the rub.’ He looked above
And pointed to a picture of
His daughter and his son beloved. ‘A bloody war’s a game for keeps.
A father sobs, a mother weeps. A farm’s laid waste, a town erased,
The earth defaced by risen apes inflamed by hate of tribe or race.
Scarce glory in it I discern, and those who die do not return.
So, fight we will if fight we must; but brothers, ask some questions first!
Has every bid for peace been made? Whose war is this? ‘Tis ours to wage?
And who’s to lead us?’ This a shout. ‘A band of drunkards weaned on stout?’

The *coup de grâce*. We stumbled past him, spilling out onto the street,
Some protesting his ill manners, others beating quick retreat. For me,
I slept not well that night. A distant thunder gave me fright.

Twice I've seen in recent weeks
While strolling 'long our local streets
A sight so striking that I stop.
A father, mother, little tot
Proceeding proudly, arms entwined.
The woman sees, the man is blind.

I marvel at this worthy wife
Who paid no heed to sightless eyes
But turned her back on pretty things,
The social posing, shallow flings,
And searched instead her suitor's soul,
Found goodness there, and built her home.

It seems to me when life began
Unequal measures lay at hand.
Good Fortune's still the scarcest spice.
A pinch is dashed in every life.
The blind man has his faithful wife
And I my sight, alone, tonight.

High upon the parapet a sentry kept the watch.
He stopped awhile. At last he smiled, for nothing moved about.
The welcome news was carried to the lair within the walls
Where laboured I with lofty thought of Logic, Truth and God.

An ordered life. All things in place.
A host of years to contemplate.
A fort upon a sacred isle.

Nestled in the crow's nest crouched the lookout, petrified
By the tempest rushing 'cross the sea that took us by surprise.
A thunderclap first scattered thought, then monumental waves
Their fury spilt o'er all we built, and washed it all away.

A mindless force, unmoved, of course,
By pleas for civilized discourse.
A blow by Nature to my head.

Nightfall now. Beneath the moon we stoke the fire high.
The beast is slain, a feast proclaimed for those of us alive.
A carnal drum and heady wine subvert the matter from our mind.
A brushing lip, a glistening breast, flesh on flesh to rhythm pressed

'Til seed is sown upon the earth.
The muddy process of rebirth.
'Til Reason rules the land again.

Bring the trembling waif within and wedge the door against the storm,
And fetch her blankets, broth and bread, then set her here
That she be warm beside me fore the crackling fire. I spy a
Lass of humble class; just see the calloused hands she has
And locks turned grey before their day.
This world, I say, is sore amiss
To violate such innocence.

Then knelt I down upon a knee to fix my eyes most earnestly
Upon this child. And barely could I quell a gasp
For half her face was scarred and slashed
Yet beautiful the other half,
So like the masks on
Theatre frieze, of Tragedy, and Comedy.

‘The Truth, I am,’ she whispered then. ‘The Knowledge sought
By all good men. The Right for whom they claim to fight
Yet soon betray and put to flight. When first
They fall in love with me they see but what they want to see.
They drape me to their hearts’ content in ‘simple,’ ‘plain,’ ‘self evident.’
But once the dark side of my face reveals my less than perfect state
The wicked flee, too oft survive; the good who stay, too often die.’

At that we heard a fearsome thunder rolling cross the rain swept vale.
The pounding of a thousand hooves
The stride of countless legionaries.
‘Give us the child!’ Their throats as one
Erupted in a chilling cry. ‘They come for me,’ she whispered then.
‘Behold the minions of the Lie.’

Not here. Not now. Not ever, nay, so long this heart beats in my breast
Shall I this precious child betray, abandon her to certain death.
Let darkness fall on all the world and shroud each soul in desperate night;
It matters only that my hearth be home to her, a source of light,
A beacon to a future age, a Hope of better times at hand,
A tiny sliver of the earth where Truth gives birth to better Man!

From my perspective, nothing's changed.
It's still a task that tests the nerve.
There's time and place to be considered,
Proper manners to observe
And most of all, inspired words.

For their part, though, it's not the same
As once it was, well, long ago.
Extraordinary, how adept
They've now become at saying no.
Though kind they are, they hurt me so.

But tell me, does Romance exist? As fact, I mean, not hollow word
That conjures up some foolish myth then perishes the moment heard.
I have in mind a state of heart that stands apart from lust or greed
Or fear of growing old alone, or zeal to start a family
Or any sort of selfish need
That taints the well of harmony.
A dreamy eyed romantic state, fixed not on self, but on one's mate.
That is what I mean.

She giggled through her tousled hair. 'Romance exist? *Mais oui, mon cher!*
It thrives about us everywhere, you silly man, so unaware.'
We entered on a patio positioned so the splendour of the stars above
Rushed to fill our eyes, and breezes off the seaside cliffs
Caressed like lips and softly moaned
As if the earth did sigh.
A moment I will ne'er forget. She smiled and softly stroked my head
And then she said to me

'Moments are Romance's years. Instants mark its fleeting days.
Permanence it knows not of. It lives, then dies, then lives again.
'Tis not of flesh like you or me, nor made of wood, or water, rock.
'Tis elemental energy that pulses for a while, then stops.
But focus on its amber glow,
Fan it till a flame doth grow;
Feed the fire long enough, and you may catch a glimpse of Love!
She blushed, and took her leave.

Evening gleam. The limousine
Now homeward bound through traffic streams
By avenue and cross-town street, then o'er river,
City glimmer on its surface bright reflecting
Like a mirror all Manhattan in the spring.

Tinted glass. I gaze entranced
At peace for once, and whole at last.
Your cheek upon my shoulder rests, your arm
Is draped across my chest, the sleepy rhythm
Of your breath within my ear I love the best.

I know, I know. You needn't say.
We'll nimbly dance from day to day, with
No pretending, no dissembling, eye to eye
And lip to lip. Pure at heart until the ending.
Nothing could be more correct.

Which of all the eyes I watch
Shall see me in that special way.
Whose of all the hands that hold
Shall reach for mine this autumn day.

Where amongst the tens of thousands
Present on this midtown street
Wanders one who also searches,
Chosen one I hope to meet.

What if I should never find you,
Tiny soul 'midst all that is.
Walk alone through life designed
For kisses and companionship.
Whence my ardent, whispered prayer
By crimson sun and twilight star
That signs and sense and simple things
Shall lead me to you, where'er you are.

Now Man is cursed to labour till the sweat pours from his brow.
And Woman's curse is labour, which can kill her, after all.
And then, alas, as if the wrath
Of fearsome God were not enough
The Man and Woman quarrel.
And break each other's hearts.

L aughs preserved on photographs.
Pleas for help on cold red brick.
Hopes that dwindle daily like
A flame that dies on candle's wick.
Tangled metal, earth and flesh,
All matter this, its path descent.
Souls unseen, the sparks of life,
Ascending to the firmament.

I spoke my mind to God today.
I had no need for holy men.
I spoke directly of my rage
That He saved not the innocent.
I thought perhaps my words in vain
That no God Is who tends his flock,
But Chance and Circumstance the names
Of It that reigns and mercy mocks.

My lady in her afterglow
Languid smile upon her lips
Folds of fabric delicate
Resting on her breasts and hips
Sees she not my humble state
Makes she not of me demand
Finds she not cause to berate
Is with me for who I am.

Blessed am I. And if I were
A painter, pigment, brush in hand
On a canvass I would capture
Woman wish of every man.
But my strength lies not in colour
Lady better you deserve
Gather parchment, quill and inkwell
I shall paint you with my words.

If we are this life to share
In friendship or in love affair
If our bond is to be blessed
With laughter, fun and happiness,
Take my hand, take this vow.

Every day a different thing
Love succumbs to bleak routine
Every moment kind, forgiving
Nothing perfect can be living
Every instant soft and caring
Every joy and sorrow sharing
Take this vow, take it now.

Be still my sweet upon your bed
A kiss I place upon your head
To guide your soul to peace and rest
A passage borne by steady breath.

You sleep. Behold, a smile I see —
Dare I believe you dream of me
As patiently by candlelight
I guard you through this troubled night.

No finer canvas ever made
than Woman's skin
for Beauty to display.

Is this what I truly wish
To trust in yet Another
Whose fleeting glance adorns my heart
Whose whim tears it asunder

Why bare my breast to darts of love
That cleave so deep, such anguish bring
When I could shelter in my mind
In peace and contemplation

Not for me. The waters of the mind are cold
And Logic bears no love to hold.
So let your raging passion through.
I need to love.
I pray with you.