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TWENTY-SEVEN
SONNETS OF LUST
AND OBSESSION
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PHOTOGRAPHY/DESIGN
ANDY WHIPPLE/ROB ANDERSON



One morning over a decade ago, I woke up with a sonnet in my head. I didn't write sonnets, or much poetry for that matter, and I'm not sure how it got there – apparently I wrote it in my sleep. However, I had no doubts about the source of its inspiration.


I was involved in a lustful, intoxicated love affair with a woman with whom I'd recently returned from a romantic trip to Seattle, where a ferry ride became the subject of my first sonnet: "The skyline hangs above the bay, a mist / of mystery as in a dream."

Suddenly I found myself writing several sonnets a week, all dedicated in spirit to the object of my lust. When our affair turned sour ("too hot not to come down," as the song says), so did the sonnets. Before I knew it, I no longer had a lover – but I had enough sonnets to make this small book.

I knew about sonnets because I'd been an English major: Writing them, I decided to learn more. I learned that "sonnet" comes from the Italian word sonnetto ("little song"), and by the 13th century the form had solidified into a 14-line poem divided into two sections, the first eight lines defining the subject matter; the closing six lines resolving the poem.

As more and more poets took up the form, the sonnet evolved. By the 16th century, Shakespeare and others had defined "an English sonnet" form with a different rhyme scheme and narrative strategy from the original

"Italian sonnet" form. Here, the first 12 lines were divided into three quatrains using a variety of rhyme schemes, closing with a rhyming couplet that resolved the poem. Moreover, by now most sonnets had become love poems. This was the tradition into which I plugged my lust and strange new energy.

A few years later, as I organized these sonnets into an order, I realized that the evolution of their changing moods followed a pattern similar to the changing of the seasons.  Poets, of course, have been telling us for a long time that love followed just such a trajectory. Without meaning to, I had written a sonnet cycle about the moods of love.

All of the sonnets in this book were written not for publication but for a woman, and only later did I decide to make them public – love affair as case history, if you will. I've never written with such abandon or such a strong attachment to a Muse. I was obsessed, it seems in retrospect, with pursuing this woman by writing about her and us, and for a while this strategy worked. Her very being, and my lustful desire for her, were the energy



behind the sonnets without which none would have gotten written at all.

Indeed, when the on-again, off-again affair ended for good, so did the sonnets. I haven't written one since.

How good are they? I have no idea. Surely some are better than others. Many use a more colloquial, less formal rhetoric than most in the tradition, though I am not the first to do this (Cummings, for example, has written sonnets in the vernacular). Some use frank, explicit sexual terms. If you are writing about lust, how can you not do this?

Today I regard the sonnets as a mystery. The person who wrote them does not appear to be a person I recognize. I wrote them while I was possessed. But I still like many of the sonnets, and I embrace the mystery responsible for their creation because mysteries make the world go round.

I've gotten permission to dedicate this book to the woman responsible for the sonnets – using the pseudonym, “Zeena.” So here they are, Zeena, the second time around. We made something that lasted, after all.

Charles Deemer
Portland, Oregon June 2005





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Some of these sonnets first appeared in the chapbook TEN SONNETS [IrvingtonStreet Press]




To take my heart, please take my warts as well!
I'm not a perfect man - but still I grow
when most men at my age freeze what they know,
and growth leads where not you or I can tell.
Sometimes I belch! Sometimes I fart and smell!
Sometimes I wake you up before the dawn
and lead you to the kitchen arm-in-arm,
where peanut-buttered pickles ring our bell.

I don't mean all the stuff in marriage vows.
I mean the human truth from A to Z,
and if you find, my dear; that your heart bows
this way - then I'm for you, and you're for me.
What is life without a little fun?
Let me know if you think you're the one.



The skyline hangs above the bay, a mist
of mystery as in a dream, and we
stand close upon the ferry's deck and kiss,
and I feel all the world as it should be.
These are moments that my heart holds dear.
When you are near, somehow I am alive
more than I've been, and everything is clear
to me: I know for what I want to strive.
Yet I don't want my love to burden you,
a chain around your heart, presumption of
your time. The things that I would hope to do
for us are full of caring and my love.
I love you for each moment that I have
and ask from you such love as you can give.



When you touch me, you paint a sky of skin
that stretches far beyond the reach of bone.
I'm gliding like a hawk upon the wind:
a solitary bird, yet not alone

as long as I'm caressed by stretch of sky,
the hands that touch my skin like shafts of light.
The shadows of my past, the habits of my
life, rise up to try and offer such a fight

that keeps their darkness safe and snug in night.
The beacons of your hands want none of this:
they fondle me, suggesting all I might
become; your lips come forward for a kiss.

Your very touch makes me want to explode,
borning a new life, letting old erode.

In my craft and solitary art,
so much within myself most of the day,
I never feel that we are far apart,
even though I do not know the way
we'll finally come to touch and best connect.
So much within myself, I look to you
for human warmth that body resurrects
from mind. A single touch by you can do
what thinking never does: turn language off
and bring my feelings to the fore, a kiss
of life to energize the soul and doff
these lettered clothes I often wear amiss.
Your touch can make my body want to sing.
Your touch can cause my very soul to sing!



I nibble at your ear and kiss your neck,
stroke your arm and press against your side;
my tongue kisses your back and starts to lick
its way to finding secrets that you hide.
My hands caress your butt and then your thighs,
my fingers slide between your buttock's crack;
they search for those warm juices that your sighs
exhale like beads of sweat upon your back.
My finger finds the wonder of your clit,
massaging it to swell up like a pearl,
until you cannot get enough of it:
your mind is all a-frenzy in a whirl
as both my fingers enter deep inside
and you begin to sway and rock and ride . . .






If our lips should never meet again;
if your arms should not around me wrap
in such a way to tell me of your ken;
if our bodies never draw the sap
each from each, flesh to flesh, the way
we've done before in miracles of night;
if it doesn't happen how it may
have been between us if my health was right;
if, I say, all dreams are lost and barn
doors closed; if this should be, my heart of hearts,
do not grieve for us or weep or mourn.
For a brief time we knew Cupid's darts!
Cherish the way women can touch men,
instead of pining for what might have been.





The smallest things demand the biggest heart.
Passion has its place, and lustful screams
that penetrate the silence of the dark
can get two lovers through their lonely dreams.
And then the morning comes, and day is long;
the screams gone, silence fills the room
and what was passion doesn't seem as strong
as when the screams were offered against doom.
But flowers make their gesture toward the sun:
as day is when the bee will come to drink,
so day is when the finest deeds are done,
and day is when the mated become linked.
Screams of passion often have their say -
true lovers bond in silence through the day.



The It's easier to give than to receive.
The giver sets the pace, shows the way
for love to bloom - or not. To believe
in love is to give; receiving is to say,
"Yes, I trust in love as well." The fear
of this is loss of control, the scary risk
of giving up a power we hold dear;
no longer to decide the way we're kissed.

Darling, it took me long to let your love
wash over me like ointment from the gods.
It's hard for me to take, easy to give:
I've had to be in charge of all the odds.
Now I learn both to give and receive;
now I learn to trust as well as believe.



So here they are, Zeena,
the second time around.
We made something that
lasted, after all.

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Mayville, Oregon
Bend, Oregon
Eugene, Oregon
Pendelton, Oregon
Halfway, Oregon
Drain, Oregon
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