

Service for February 11, 2007

**What's love got to do with it?**    *Created by Lone Jensen*

Walking On Pink Clouds,

I climbed the door, And shut the stairs

I took off my prayers, And said my shoes

I turned out the bed, And got into the light

All because

HE KISSED ME GOOD NIGHT    By Anonymous

**Walking on Pink Clouds.**

Cloud walking is both intoxicating and exhilarating. Once when I was 16, I fell hopelessly in love with a completely unattainable man. All I really knew was that I wanted to be near him at any cost, wanted him to notice me and to love me. To gain his love, I would have jumped off a bridge, left my home, dyed my hair, changed my religion and even given up coffee. You get the idea. I was in a state of temporary and delicious insanity. He was an American, in Denmark temporarily, would leave in two weeks and despite my best

effort, he just would not love me with equal passion. Instead he gave me what I thought were really lame excuses, he was about to enter law school and had to return. Well, I thought, we can write and I can come over there later. He was black and because I was not he did not want us this relationship to become serious. To my ignorant and naïve ears that made no sense at all. Why should that matter? So after a few intense dates, we did say goodbye and I was so heartbroken, that my family sent me over to visit my aunt for a vacation, and in order to forget about him. When I returned they told me that this American black man had been standing across the street for a couple of days, staring at our apartment, before he went away, forever. That left me feeling as if I had missed the train to happiness, here was my true love, lost forever. So he remained safely within in my imagination as a perfect love, forever young and handsome, forever bathed in that rosy, warm light of first love. I was sure I would never love again, but of course I did, and fell into and out of love. The last time I fell passionately and deliciously, insanely in love was some 28 years ago when I met my husband Bruce. This time it was for keeps.

Romantic love is as intoxicating and ethereal as champagne bubbles. It inspires us to write either great or

really bad poetry, depending on our talents and just try to imagine opera or Shakespeare without romantic love? How poor and predictable our lives would be without it. Yet one cannot sustain cloud walking for very long. The lovers look into each others eyes and see their own ideal images of what a love should be. Just as if they were holding up mirrors to each other. That kind of love is blind. How long can you keep that up? And it can be fatal. Jealousy can drive a sane person into insanity. Our latest example is the tragic story of the NASA astronaut, who wanted to kidnap and hurt her perceived rival. Passion is so powerful a force of nature, as our genes and hormones push us to love one another, that it can make intelligent, sensible people into reckless fools. “Falling in love again, never wanted to, what I am to do, can’t help it. “ Marlene Dietrich used to sing those words in her husky deep voice, evoking fantasies within the hearts of soldiers on both sides in World War II. Her point though is very true. We cannot command love. We cannot control those we fall in love with but we can decide with whom we stay, as the romantic mist clears sit away and we really see each other, warts and all. We can ask the question: Will you love me then just as I am?

## *The Wisdom of Love*

ee cummings: **i carry your heart**

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in  
my heart) i am never without it (anywhere  
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing, my darling)

i fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i want  
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart  
i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

## **The Wisdom of Love**

If Romeo and Juliet had lived and sat across from each other  
every morning at the breakfast table would we have remembered  
them? Pink clouds and everyday wisdom seem like an odd match

and yet if we are lucky, that first love grows into something strong, sacred, ordinary and lasting. We are moved by love's messages and tragic lover's stories reach our hearts. How many of you saw the photo in the paper last week of an ancient grave, a burial done thousands of years ago and found when they were laying a foundation for a new building near Verona, Italy, the setting of the play Romeo and Juliet. Two skeletons were found, not side by side, but hugging each other, entwined in an eternal embrace. They were young, Archeologists think, because they had good teeth. Ancient love perhaps, but still young love. But what about lasting love? One of my favorite poems about what happens in marriage is by Marge Piercy. Feel free to make it gender neutral in your own mind. *Remember the princess who kissed the frog so he became a prince? At first they danced all weekend toasted each other in the morning with coffee, with champagne at night and always with kisses. Perhaps it was in bed after the first year that she noticed he had become cold with her. She had to sleep with a heating pad and a down comforter. His manner grew increasingly chilly and damp when she entered a room. He spent his time in water sports, hydroponics, working on his insect collection...*

*Then in the third year when she said to him one day: My dearest are you taking your vitamins daily, you look quite green, he leaped away from her. Finally on their fifth anniversary she*

*confronted him. My precious don't; you love me any more? He replied: Rivet, Rivet, Rivet! Though courtship turns frogs into princes marriage turns them quietly back.* I like this poem because as any married or deeply committed couple knows, you better not take yourself too seriously. Laughter has saved many a relationship from crashing on the rocks.

There is no greater gift we can give to someone than to love them as they really are. With their flaws and their gifts and even with those really annoying little habits that will on some days drive you absolutely crazy. What does it take? Luck, for one thing, it sure helps if the person you fall in love with actually has the qualities that make it possible for you to live with them without entertaining the fantasy of murder too frequently. Self knowledge helps. When you have honestly ferreted out what it is you *must* have in a partner, you have a better chance of finding someone with whom you can grow old. What you do not want is a dance of magic mirrors, where all you see is the reflection of each other and each partner becomes less and less themselves, until it seems as if they do not exist without that reflection.

As Khalil Gibran wrote: *Stand together, yet not too near together. For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow. But let there be spaces in your togetherness, And let the winds of the heavens*

*dance between you.* This is ancient and wise advice for those who want their love to last. With time and age even those of us who will not be such wise poets, do develop a bit of practical wisdom. We may set out looking for the perfect Mr. or Ms. right. So we kiss the perfect prince or princess and they turn out to be a frog. Well, Kermit is kind of cute isn't he? Besides what about your own slightly webbed toes? Lasting love is a precious gift and a true grace upon the world. But it takes a kind of stubborn persistence, a willingness to love through the really rough spots. To love that honestly is taking a great risk. We mortal human beings love another mortal human being. Lasting love takes courage. Human relationships are always a bit messy and often complicated. It takes amazing grace to make it work.

### **Divine Love**

#### **A Prayer in Spring** by Robert Frost

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;  
And give us not to think so far away  
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here  
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,  
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;

And make us happy in the happy bees,  
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird  
That suddenly above the bees is heard,  
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,  
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,  
The which it is reserved for God above  
To sanctify to what far ends He will,  
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

### **Divine Love**

The Hindus grasped the truth long ago, that desire is the source of all creation, a concept that underscores the link between sexual love and godliness. We Unitarians and Universalists have a harder time, as do most Protestant religions, with this concept. The stark and unforgiving shadow of Puritanism and unreformed Calvinism looms large in our culture. Love, as a way of being in the world, is akin to compassion, as close as we can get to enlightenment and the divine. The Universalists saw God as love manifested in the human heart and most importantly in how we act

with one another. With this I agree. Shall we believe in God at all, then surely it should be a loving God who is far more compassionate and certainly bigger than us. Not the cruel, harsh caricature painted by those who seem utterly obsessed with what other people do in the privacy of their bedroom.

But what does it mean when we say that God is love? To me it means simply that God is found in human acts of compassion and love. In other words we are God's hearts and hands. Or if you prefer since faith in God or Goddess is not a requirement here, we are *freethinking mystics with hands*. (Tom Owen Towle) *Divine or universal love is actually a rather difficult way to live. Think of Gandhi, Jesus, Mother Teresa or the Buddha. Does God have a heart? The ancient Hebrews were the first people to arrive at an abstract notion of God and thus forbade images. But he is represented from the very beginning, as having a heart like theirs: a central place in him that can be hurt and angered and softened—and changed.* (Joan Godwin)

The vast Universe inspires awe but it is hard to imagine it as loving. Unless you think of love as being equal to creation and then yes, stars are born and die, entire galaxies swirl in birthing pains and spirals. We are billion year's old stardust and part of this creation. But love, love is human and easiest experienced on a human scale.

We can love that which is beyond us, find solace in the beauty of nature and celebrate the re-birth of spring as in the Robert Frost poem. That is a form of universal love: to enjoy and take pleasure in that which we do not and can never possess.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: *The kingdom of God is like nothing we expect, it has no yesterday and no day after tomorrow, it does not come in “a thousand years”—it is something experienced in the heart, it is everywhere and nowhere.*

The kingdom of God that Nietzsche wrote about is one definition of Divine love. It is found everywhere and nowhere but experienced in the human heart. Love is a human sacrament that can hold us to our highest ideals and bring out the better angels of our nature. But the way we connect most deeply with divine love is through human love.

To be intimate means to be profoundly interior. In Latin it comes from the word *inter*, meaning within. In our intimate relationships, the most “within” dimensions of ourselves and the other are engaged. That is one reason love can be such a powerful force. It can transform our lives. To be fully known and loved is liberating, comforting and evokes deep gratitude. It is that ideal innermost love that so many religions search for. The Universalists saw God as that love. So what has love got to do with it? *It has everything to do with it.*

