

# This Be The Verse

## Desprez

### 1. The Boat

Stevie Smith (1902-1971)

The boat that took my love away  
He sent again to me  
To tell me that he should not sleep  
Alone beneath the sea.

The flower and fruit of love are mine  
The ant, the fieldmouse and the mole,  
But now a tiger prowls without  
And claws upon my soul.

Love is not love that wounded bleeds  
And bleeding sullies slow.  
Come death within my hands and I  
Unto my love will go.

### Not Waving, But Drowning

Stevie Smith

Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning:  
I was much further out than you thought  
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking  
And now he's dead  
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,  
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always  
(Still the dead one lay moaning)  
I was much too far out all my life  
And not waving but drowning.

### 2. This Be The Verse

Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.  
They may not mean to, but they do.  
They fill you with the faults they had  
And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn  
By fools in old-style hats and coats,  
Who half the time were soppy-stern  
And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.  
It deepens like a coastal shelf.  
Get out as early as you can,  
And don't have any kids yourself.

### 3. Ghosts

Anne Sexton (1928-1974)

Some ghosts are women,  
neither abstract nor pale,  
their breasts as limp as killed fish.  
Not witches, but ghosts  
who come, moving their useless arms  
like forsaken servants.

Not all ghosts are women,  
I have seen others;  
fat, white-bellied men,  
wearing their genitals like old rags.  
Not devils, but ghosts.  
This one thumps barefoot, lurching  
above my bed.  
But that isn't all.



Some ghosts are children.  
Not angels, but ghosts;  
curling like pink tea cups  
on any pillow, or kicking,  
showing their innocent bottoms, wailing  
for Lucifer.

[voice: Anne Sexton]

#### **Noon Walk On The Asylum Lawn**

*Anne Sexton*

The summer sun ray  
shifts through a suspicious tree.  
though I walk through the valley of the shadow  
It sucks the air  
and looks around for me.

The grass speaks.  
I hear green chanting all day.  
I will fear no evil, fear no evil  
The blades extend  
and reach my way.

The sky breaks.  
It sags and breathes upon my face.  
In the presence of mine enemies, mine enemies  
The world is full of enemies.  
There is no safe place.

#### **4. Bereft Child's First Night**

*Frances Bellerby (1899-1975)*

I've come to close your door, my handsome, my darling  
I've come to close your door and never come again.  
The shadow on the ceiling will not be mine, my darling,  
So if you wake in terror cry some other name.

There's first time and last, my handsome, my treasure,  
No other time, nothing between.  
So whenever the hand of darkness clenches on your candle  
Shut your eyes, my darling, and slip back into our dream.

#### **5. Funeral Blues**

*W.S. Auden (1907-1973)*

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone.  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone.  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead.  
Put crêpe bows round the white necks of the public doves,  
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;  
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

#### **6. To a Daughter Leaving Home**

*Linda Pastan (b. 1932)*

When I taught you  
at eight to ride  
a bicycle, loping along  
beside you  
as you wobbled away  
on two round wheels,  
my own mouth rounding  
in surprise when you pulled  
ahead down the curved  
path of the park,  
I kept waiting  
for the thud  
of your crash as I

sprinted to catch up,  
while you grew  
smaller, more breakable  
with distance,  
pumping, pumping  
for your life, screaming  
with laughter,  
the hair flapping  
behind you like a  
handkerchief waving  
goodbye.

[voice: Anne Sexton]

## 7. To Put One Brick Upon Another

*Philip Larkin*

To put one brick upon another,  
Add a third and then a fourth,  
Leaves no time to wonder whether  
What you do has any worth.

But to sit with bricks around you  
While the winds of heaven bawl  
Weighing what you should or can do  
Leaves no doubt of it at all.

## 8. Het Huwelijk

*Willem Elsschot (1882-1960)*

Toen hij bespeurde hoe de nevel van den tijd  
in d'ogen van zijn vrouw de vonken uit kwam doven,  
haar wangen had verweerd, haar voorhoofd had doorkloven,  
toen wendde hij zich af en vrat zich op van spijt.

Hij vloekte en ging te keer en trok zich bij den baard  
en mat haar met den blik, maar kon niet meer begeren,  
hij zag de grootse zonde in duivelsplicht verkeren  
en hoe zij tot hem opkeek als een stervend paard.

Maar sterven deed zij niet, al zoog zijn helse mond  
het merg uit haar gebeente, dat haar tóch bleeg dragen.  
Zij dorst niet spreken meer, niet vragen of niet klagen,  
en rilde waar zij stond, maar leefde en bleef gezond.

Hij dacht: ik sla haar dood en steek het huis in brand.  
Ik moet de schimmel van mijn stramme voeten wassen  
en rennen door het vuur en door het water plassen  
tot bij een ander lief in enig ander land.

Maar doodslaan deed hij niet, want tussen droom en daad  
staan wetten in den weg en praktische bezwaren,  
en ook weemoedigheid, die niemand kan verklaren,  
en die des avonds komt, wanneer men slapen gaat.

Zo ging jaren heen. De kindren werden groot  
en zagen hoe de man dien zij hun vader heetten,  
bewegingloos en zwijgend bij het vuur gezeten,  
een godvergeten en vervaarlijke' aanblik bood.

## 9. Wants

*Philip Larkin*

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone:  
However the sky grows dark with invitation-cards  
However we follow the printed directions of sex  
However the family is photographed under the flag-staff -  
Beyond all this, the wish to be alone.

Beneath it all, the desire for oblivion runs:  
Despite the artful tensions of the calendar,  
The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,  
The costly aversion of the eyes away from death -  
Beneath it all, the desire for oblivion runs.

## Angel Of Fire And Genitals

Anne Sexton

from: *Angels of the Love Affair*

Angel of fire and genitals, do you know slime,  
that green mama who first forced me to sing,  
who put me first in the latrine, that pantomime  
of brown where I was beggar and she was king?  
I said, "The devil is down that festering hole."  
Then he bit me in the buttocks and took over my  
soul.

Fire woman, you of the ancient flame, you  
of the Bunsen burner, you of the candle,  
you of the blast furnace, you of the barbecue,  
you of the fierce solar energy, Mademoiselle,  
take some ice, take some snow, take a month of  
rain  
and you would gutter in the dark, cracking up your  
brain.

Mother of fire, let me stand at your devouring gate  
as the sun dies in your arms and you loosen it's  
terrible weight.

## 10. Seven Times

Anne Sexton

from: *The Death Baby*

I died seven times  
in seven ways  
letting death give me a sign,  
letting death place his mark on my forehead,  
crossed over, crossed over

And death took root in that sleep.  
In that sleep I held an ice baby  
and I rocked it  
and was rocked by it.  
Oh Madonna, hold me.  
I am a small handful.

## 11. Buying the Whore

Anne Sexton

You are the roast beef I have purchased  
and I stuff you with my very own onion.

You are a boat I have rented by the hour  
and I steer you with my rage until you run aground.

You are a glass that I have paid to shatter  
and I swallow the pieces down with my spit.

You are the grate I warm my trembling hands on,  
searing the flesh until it's nice and juicy.

You stink like my Mama under your bra  
and I vomit into your hand like a jackpot  
its cold hard quarters.

## 12. Let It Be Forgotten

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

Let it be forgotten, as a flower is forgotten,  
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold,  
Let it be forgotten for ever and ever,  
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If anyone asks, say it was forgotten  
Long and long ago,  
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed footfall  
In a long forgotten snow.

*All music, instruments and programming: Desprez  
Vocals: Desprez, Thilde Meer, So Fine  
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