

Readings

Apache Song

Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there is no loneliness for you;
For each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two bodies,
but there is only one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place
to enter into the days of your togetherness.
And may your days be good and long upon this earth.

Buddhist Marriage Homily

Nothing happens without a cause. The union of this man and woman has not come about accidentally but is the foreordained result of many past lives. This tie can therefore not be broken or dissolved. In the future, happy occasions will come as surely as the morning. Difficult times will come as surely as night. When things go joyously, meditate according to the Buddhist tradition. When things go badly, meditate. Meditation in the manner of the Compassionate Buddha will guide your life. To say the words "love and compassion" is easy. But to accept love and compassion are built upon patience and perseverance is not easy. Your marriage will be firm and lasting if you remember this.

Baal Shem Tov (excerpt)

From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.

Diane Ackerman - "A Natural History of Love" (excerpt)

Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots stretching deep into dark and mysterious days . . . the heart is a loving museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of living and being loved.

Margaret Atwood - "Variations on the Word Sleep"

I would like to watch you sleeping,
which may not happen.
I would like to watch you,
sleeping. I would like to sleep
with you, to enter
your sleep as its smooth dark wave
slides over my head.

and walk with you through that lucent
wavering forest of bluegreen leaves
with its watery sun & three moons
towards the cave where you must descend,

towards your worst fear

I would like to give you the silver
branch, the small white flower, the one
word that will protect you
from the grief at the center
of your dream, from the grief
at the center. I would like to follow
you up the long stairway
again & become
the boat that would row you back
carefully, a flame
in two cupped hands
to where your body lies
beside me, and you enter
it as easily as breathing in

I would like to be the air
that inhabits you for a moment
only. I would like to be that unnoticed
& that necessary.

Charles Baudelaire - "Invitation to the Voyage"

My child, my sister, dream
How sweet all things would seem
Were we in that kind land to live together,
And there love slow and long,
There love and die among
Those scenes that image you, in knee-deep heather

Drowned suns that glimmer there
Through cloud disheveled air
Move me with such mystery as appears
Within those other skies
Of your radiant eyes
When I behold them shining through their tears

There, there is nothing but grace and measure,
Richness, quietness, and pleasure

Furniture that wears
The luster of the years
Softly would glow within our glowing chamber,
Flowers of rarest bloom
Proffering their perfume

Mixed with vague fragrances of amber;
Gold ceilings would there be,
Mirrors deep as the sea,
The walls all in an Eastern splendor hung -

Nothing but should address
 The soul's loneliness,
 Speaking her sweet and secret native tongue

There, there is nothing but grace and measure,
 Richness, quietness, and pleasure

See, sheltered from the swells
 There in the still canals
 Those drowsy ships that dream of sailing forth;
 It is to satisfy
 Your least desire, they ply
 Hither through all the waters of the earth

The sun at close of day
 Clothes the fields of hay,
 Then the canals, at last the town entire
 In hyacinth and gold:
 Slowly the land is rolled
 Sleepward under a sea of gentle fire

There, there is nothing but grace and measure,
 Richness, quietness, and pleasure

[Wendell Berry - "The Meaning of Marriage is Communal" \(excerpt\)](#)

Because the condition of marriage is worldly and its meaning communal, no one party to it can be solely in charge. What you alone think it ought to be, it is not going to be. Where you alone want it to go, it is not going to go. It is going where the two of you-and marriage, time, life, history and the world-will take you. You do not know the road; you have committed your life to a way.

[Wendell Berry - "The Country of Marriage" \(excerpt\)](#)

Sometimes our life reminds me of a forest in which there is a graceful clearing and in that opening a house, an orchard and a garden, comfortable shades, and flowers red and yellow in the sun, a pattern made in the light for the light to return to. The forest is mostly dark, its way to be made anew day after day, the dark richer than the light and more blessed provided we stay brave enough to keep going in.

[Michael Blumenthal - "A Marriage" \(excerpt\)](#)

You are holding up a ceiling with both arms. It is very heavy, but you must hold it up or else it will fall on you. Your arms are tired, terribly tired, and, as the day goes on, it feels as if either your arms or the ceiling will soon collapse. But then, unexpectedly, something wonderful happens: someone, a man or a woman, walks into the room and holds their arms up to the ceiling beside you. So you finally get to take down your arms. You feel the relief of respite, the blood flowing back into your fingers and your arms. And when your partner's arms tire, you hold up your own to relieve them again. And it can go on like this for many years without the house falling.

Leo Buscaglia - From "Love"

In discussing love, it would be well to consider the following premises:

One cannot give what he does not possess.

To give love, you must possess love.

One cannot teach what he does not understand.

To teach love, you must comprehend love.

One cannot know what he does not study.

To study love, you must live in love.

One cannot appreciate what he does not recognize.

To recognize love, you must be receptive to love.

One cannot have doubt about that which he wishes to trust.

To trust love, you must be convinced of love.

One cannot admit what he does not yield to.

To yield to love, you must be vulnerable to love.

One cannot live what he does not dedicate himself to.

To dedicate yourself to love, you must be forever growing in love.

Corinthians, 13:4-8, 13

If I have all the eloquence of men and women or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries and knowing everything, and if I have all the faith so as to move mountains, but am without love, I am nothing. If I give away all I possess, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but am without love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. There are in the end three things that endure: Faith, Hope and Love. The greatest of these is Love.

e.e. cummings - "love is thicker than forget"

love is thicker than forget
 more thinner than recall
 more seldom than a wave is wet
 more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
 and less it shall unbecome
 than all the sea which only
 is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
 less never than alive
 less bigger than the least begin
 less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
 and more it cannot die
 than all the sky which only
 is higher than the sky

Ruth Daigon- "All the Leaves Say Yes"

In the other, the sunken life,
in the world of green feedings,
all the leaves say yes, meadows
of curved stems say yes and warmth
flows from the depth of this yes
out toward horizons where hills
are still transparent and the ground
white with drippings from the moon.
Waking from this memory of green,
we'll face the skirmish of each day,
with hostages retrieved from the night.
This time will be different, new patterns
for the feet, wings for the eye,
rhythms for the heart, and our names
everywhere like grass.

Kahlil Gibran - from The Prophet - "Marriage"

Then Almitra spoke again and said, And what of Marriage, master?
And he answered, saying:
You were born together, and together you shall be forever more.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness.
And let the winds of heaven dance between you.
Love one another, but make not a bond of love;
let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And 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.

Irish Blessing

May the wind be always at your back.
May the road rise up to meet you.
May the sun shine warm on your face,
The rains fall soft on your fields.
Until we meet again, may the Lord
Hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Kuan Tao-Sheng, translated by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung

You and I have so much love
that it burns like a fire,
in which we bake a lump of clay

molded into a figure of you
 and a figure of me.
 Then we take both of them,
 and break them into pieces,
 and mix the pieces with water,
 and mold again a figure of you,
 and a figure of me.
 I am in your clay.
 You are in my clay.
 In life we share a single quilt.
 In death we will share one bed.

Christopher Marlowe - "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"

Come live with me and be my love,
 And we will all the pleasures prove
 That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
 Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks
 Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
 By shallow rivers to whose falls
 Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
 And a thousand fragrant posies,
 A cap of flowers and a kirtle
 Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool,
 Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
 Fair lined slippers for the cold,
 With buckets of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
 With coral clasps and amber studs;
 And if these pleasures may thee move,
 Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
 For thy delight each May morning:
 If these delights thy mind may move,
 Then live with me and be my love.

Janet Miles - "Two Trees"

A portion of your soul has been
 entwined with mine
 A gentle kind of togetherness, while
 separately we stand.
 As two trees deeply rooted in
 separate plots of ground,

While their topmost branches
come together,
Forming a miracle of lace
against the heavens.

Pablo Neruda - Sonnet 17

I do not love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz
or arrow of carnations that propagate fire;
I love you as certain dark things are loved,
secretly, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom and carries
hidden within itself the light of those flowers,
and thanks to your love, darkly in my body
lives dense fragrance that rises from the earth.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,
I love you simply, without problems or pride:
I love you in this way because I don't know any other way of loving

but this: in which there is no I or you,
so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand,
so intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close.

Edmund O'Neill - "Marriage Joins Two People in its Circle of Love"

Marriage is a commitment to life,
the best that two people can find and bring out in each other.
It offers opportunities for sharing and growth
that no other relationship can equal.
It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime.

Within the circle of its love,
marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships.
A wife and a husband are each other's best friend,
confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic.
And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing,
and the love of the other may resemble
the tender caring of a parent or child.

Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life.
Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher,
commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly,
and passes away more quickly.

Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life
is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life,
new experiences, new ways of expressing
a love that is deeper than life.

When two people pledge their love and care for each other in marriage,

they create a spirit unique unto themselves that binds them closer than any spoken or written words.

Marriage is a promise, a potential made in the hearts of two people who love each other and takes a lifetime to fulfill.

Rainer Maria Rilke - Letters to a Young Poet (excerpt)

For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation . . . loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering and uniting with another person-it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen . . . to become world in himself for the sake of another person; it is a great demanding claim on him, something that chooses him and calls him to vast distances.

Ruth 1:16 - 17 (excerpt)

Ruth said, "Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! For wherever you go, I will go, wherever you lodge, I will lodge, your people shall be my people, your God shall be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there be buried."

William Shakespeare - Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments; love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds
 Or bends with the remover to remove.
 O, no, it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to ever wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error, and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Margery Williams - The Velveteen Rabbit (excerpt)

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but Really loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get all loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox - "Love's Coming"

She had looked for his coming as warriors come,
With the clash of arms and the bugle's call;
But he came instead with a stealthy tread,
Which she did not hear at all.

She had thought how his armor would blaze in the sun,
As he rode like a prince to claim his bride:
In the sweet dim light of the falling night
She found him at her side.

She had dreamed how the gaze of his strange, bold eye
Would wake her heart to a sudden glow:
She found in his face the familiar grace
Of a friend she used to know.

She had dreamed how his coming would stir her soul,
As the ocean is stirred by the wild storm's strife:
He brought her the balm of a heavenly calm,
And a peace which crowned her life.

William Butler Yeats - "When You are Old"

When you are old and grey and full of sleep
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes held once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true;
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.