

# LEMON AND HONEY

Marilyn Holly

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May

Maybe more lemon than honey, though one never knows.

MH

ONCE AGAIN SPRING

Fuchsia.

Azalea blossoms along the way  
mate with light, with my eyes,  
and here is fuchsia.

From another world

I walk this one embodied.  
Granted one moment  
I give birth to Fuchsia.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN ACADEMIA

LECTURE BY THE LORDS OF INTELLECT  
TO A LADY UNMAGICCKED

My dear, your mind ... your mind's  
a tangled thicket and a wild, wild maze  
where you've wandered lost, delightedly  
mapless. Nobody's told you that you're lost.

And now you've come to this far isle  
of English gardens, well-marked paths,  
and topiaries well defined and pruned  
to shapes the Lords decree.  
And oh my dear, your mind, your mind!  
It will not do,

We'll garden you and prune you into shape,  
and map your paths. And you  
will never wander lost again.

And do not speak  
of magic.

## HARD STREET

(PROSTITUTION DISTRICT, ZURICH,  
WITH APPLICATION TO SELLING ONE'S SOUL IN ACADEMIA)

"Heisse marrone!" shouts the man  
who sells roast chestnuts from his cart.  
Some of these, and a wurst on a bun,  
will occupy your mouth  
as you walk, oh customer.  
You look, and choose which pockmarked face  
to buy for an hour. I doubt you expect  
sweet innocence.

I ask myself, don't you save out, pure,  
one place on your neck he mustn't touch,  
to which your virginity migrates  
and holds itself in hope?  
Don't you hope he'll find your soul  
within your still sweet limbs?

And I answer, no. Why dream. I've known them all,  
been duped, disgusted, in despair.  
They pay for my sex machine  
to grind out favorite tricks,  
they order me to strip, to do their fantasies,  
and I do it. I must eat.

But oh, I'm a tired tart  
on a hard, hard street.

## SONG OF THE PROFESSOR'S WIFE

*Diary entry:*

My psychiatrist  
digs to this level razed by fire.  
The stony ruined rooms lay open at the top  
walls crumbled,  
staircases gone. Here and there  
lie shards with symbols of male gods.  
Is that a woman's shriek on the eerie air?  
In our dig beneath my streets  
I come to this. No one wants to see it,  
tour books don't mention it.

*Faculty Club gossip:*

In our better restaurants till recently  
the nicest clientele  
dined in mutual approval.  
Mysteriously, this drunken woman comes  
to the tables now. She is not nice,  
not at all what we are used to here.  
We wonder what it all portends?

*Diary entry:*

My husband, the Professor, is a fine, fine man.  
Young men cluster round him,  
drinking his talk of dignity,  
of justice and equality.  
Young women fantasize  
there's a good sweet lay in the old guy yet.  
I'm his floozy wife,  
wandering mad, and muttering,  
and making scenes.  
People wonder why.  
His cross to bear, they say.

FOOD



## SONG OF THE BUG

Stretched out, a lazing lizard on a rock  
eyes hooded and unblinking  
scales glittering in the sun,  
you fix your unmoving gaze on me.

I start to scuttle by  
on business of my own. I pause,  
dazed by scaly glitter  
confused by eyes that show no life.  
Out darts  
your fast, fast tongue  
that snaps me up  
for dinner.

## SONG OF THE SPIDER

And I wait.  
Did I plan my web too foolishly,  
it's far too small,  
                  it catches very little  
and I am big and hungry.  
My legs curl hopefully,  
the feelers next my mouth  
pull something toward me  
but it's nothing after all.

I spun a world too small  
for one my size.  
Big plans intend big webs.  
But what went wrong?  
As world-spirits go,  
I've failed. I meant  
to spin an empire  
but end up here  
with a few torn threads,  
waiting, hungry.

## SONG OF THE OCTOPUS

I am a giant octopus  
floating hungrily  
in a great glass tank.

You two-legs walking by,  
you look at me,  
and I am hungry.  
I send out tentacles,  
sinewy and curling.  
Inside me is a giant empty place.

With all my arms I reach  
... this glass.  
This glass  
between my curling arms and food  
that looks and walks on by.

## SONG OF THE RABBIT

And rabbit theology says,  
"It is for the greater good  
that rabbits die,  
for hawks and eagles feed on them  
and verily, this is good.  
My brethren it is hard  
for our rabbit minds to see  
the Great Plan, but trust in it  
we must. For we learn and grow  
as talons seize us and we slip  
down hungry gullets, praise  
the Rabbit Lord."

## 30,000 YEARS AGO: THE HUNTER'S SONG

The shaman leads us  
into this cave's many rooms.  
The dark makes me tremble, and now quite suddenly  
his torch lights up the great bison on the wall,  
its painted belly swelling  
over a bulge in the rock.

I step back in fear.  
Tomorrow will be my first hunt and I am afraid,  
but the shaman's chant enchants  
me to a dreamy union with the beast.

We hunters are gathered  
for the rites before the next day's hunt.  
The shaman with his torch held high  
leads us deeper into the cave  
where herds of painted game now leap into flickering light  
as they race along the walls.  
The holy man's chanting and his holy words  
tell me the game will give themselves to me.  
My fears are gone. I am filled  
with my sacred goal  
to bring back home much meat.

What I hunt will fall to my spear.

In the feast afterward, I shall chew and swallow down  
the animals' swiftness, cleverness and skill  
while my belly gets its fill.

BRIEF HONEY

## TO SOMEONE NEWLY MET

A drone string under minor modal tones  
on a fretless dulcimer  
sang how winds once keened through pines  
for a lost Truelove.

Now polyrhythmic polytonal dissonance  
makes unfamiliar chords.  
My stomach chakra  
turns and burns, speaks  
messages my brain is slow to grasp.  
My body's an instrument  
to my stranger-soul, this stranger in me  
plays me strangely.

I don't know this music.

## CROCODILE

When the armor comes off,  
when we begin to see  
the break lines on our hearts,  
oh, may saving drops of grace  
    come to us then from another heart.

The gentle sweet animals  
within us now come forth  
and the armored crocodile  
softens his hide.  
Gently he creeps along the land,  
we need not fear him now.



## JAKE IN AFRICA

What did you hear from the trees  
that time in Africa,  
and why did they take it away,  
the white doctors who mistake  
visions for madness.

Had you been Native, the blacks  
would have called you a holy man,  
you'd be asked to tell  
what the trees have said, as wisdom  
hard to get and valuable.

But now you are one of them,  
the white doctors who snatch dreams.  
and medicate the soul  
to make it quiet and small.

## GOODBYE

Deep rutted thin dirt road  
into the rain forest.  
We drive for hours  
lost under the ancient green,  
where we are  
isn't on the map.

Here the road stops,  
nothing here, not even a hut.  
The car's mired in the mud.  
We throw clothes under the tires,  
rocking out.  
Turning around we go back,  
musing.

Some roads stop like this.

## CLOSED SCRIPT IN SCARLET

The night we ended it  
we danced under moonlight  
in a little city square.  
The air smelled of gasoline and flowers,  
a passerby waved and walked on,  
streetlights flickered, mosquitoes  
bit your face. I laughed, telling you, "Serves you right, meat eater."

We giggled like kids.

I called you to the sidewalk  
as you stood moonstruck;  
you swept me close to you.  
Oh, how sweet your body was.

"I release us," I said.

We left separately, the moment  
was a closed script in scarlet.

## ELEPHANTS ONCE CHAINED

Aimless as tumbleweeds  
on a flat, flat land,  
I want to blow by.  
But elephants, once chained,  
can be held by threads.

I want to go  
I want to stay.

Flatlands are lonely.

For those held by threads  
cramped rooms feel like home.

I want to go  
I want to stay ...

## DO THIS PATHOLOGISTS

Do this, pathologists:  
when I have died,  
take out my heart,  
examine it for break lines,  
and check for hunger.  
Malnourished hearts  
shivel up, or else,  
if hard and brittle,  
fall to shards.

Here on the table  
fresh from the morgue  
I am quiet and cold.  
They remove my heart,  
they hold it up  
looking closely under lights.

Yes, now they see  
the epoxied breaks  
reset together.  
But cause of death  
in this shriveled specimen,  
the doctors say,  
was hunger.

## PHANTOM LIMB

I amputate you.

Where you were  
it hurts.

You are not there,  
not where the limb  
I needed used to be.

Gangrenous feeling  
poisoned me,  
you had to be cut off.

But where you were  
it hurts.

## ARSON

You fired dry tinder,  
absent too long  
the rain.  
I was tinder and I burned.

Lit matches tossed  
to spills of oil  
I was oil  
and I burned.

To relieve your chill  
you watched me burn.

## AGAINST TRUTH

Oh the truth will set us free  
they say ... for what?  
To walk a barren plain  
where a cold wind blows?  
Give me a stiff, stiff drink  
of illusion, and false friends  
to embroider poetry on fact,  
and down with truth  
for who can live with it.



## THRENODY

You blow in the wind  
like dry leaves  
in a northern November.

Lying flat on a plate  
you rail at Time  
that eats up your life.

You anxiously throttle  
the colors you meet,  
and beauty chokes.

In granite you carve  
the Angel of Death  
over your grave.

NEW HONEY

## YOUR FLUTE

Hearing the song you are,  
collecting your moments,  
I catch my breath.  
I follow your cadences  
to learn you.

I shiver  
I endure your grace, wondering  
how in memory to hold  
your rhythms.

My pen  
longs to become your flute.

## ATTACHMENT

I'll give a turn to my magic ring,  
my very strange friend,  
and I'm there with you now.

Or shall I email myself  
in the attachment above.

Click on me.

Just feel my breath  
gliding under your collar  
my mouth on your eyebrows,  
my kiss on your throat.  
My hand loves the base of your head  
where it curves.

## WHERE BEING OPENS TO THIRST

Lets go running about  
spying on lovers  
observing their ways.  
Oh where are the lovers?

Where Being opens to thirst,  
there lovers gather.

Lets honor the lovers,  
sing their courage, their faith,  
sing the opening of Being  
to thirst.

## DOWN HERE, LISTENING WITH THE FISH

As if I sent sonar under water  
to bounce off a ship submerged  
long time, and now  
gone all to heaving boards,

where a watery ghost treads lifeless,  
singing forties' night club songs  
in French, with a wink  
and a dirty joke or two  
to entertain small fishes  
that glide past rotting decks.

Where his heart once was,  
is smoke  
in which if he looked  
he could remember why his heart  
burned out so long ago  
though he never noticed.

He was all at sea  
when the fiery wreck occurred.  
Transition to his ghostly form  
went unnoticed too; he thinks  
he's still alive.

Why have I spent  
such feeling from my cautions purse  
down here listening with the fish,  
looking for him, looking for  
the source of the watery music.

## DROWNING

You are today too real.  
You were just here,  
you left your jacket,  
Waves of you almost drown me.

I feel your sea-pulse blooded life  
ebbing and flowing  
you gentle and you roaring.  
I'm tossed in your wake

The current pulls me in.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

There was a day, a sunny day,  
when loveliest eternity rings  
slipped off my finger,  
each one circled round  
with little jewels,  
whether ruby, emerald, sapphire,  
citrine or diamond.

Into a heap of twigs, leaves, dirt  
they fell upon the ground.

How carefully I gathered them  
into a box I held,  
sorting and cleaning them one by one,  
luster all dimmed by dirt,  
though in the sunlight I was led  
to sort and clean, to clean and sort.

And I shall wear some yet again,  
and they will sing  
how jeweled eternity intersects  
this time with you.



CHILDHOOD

## MY FATHER

As if you slip into the moment,  
invisible, and the air stirs  
over my trembling arm  
as you pass.

And almost, though you're dead,  
we walk again in the garden,  
a father and his little girl. We talk  
about time  
about the minutes and the seconds.

Oh, take my hand.

## FATHER CON MAN

Your soul's landscape  
Is littered with the dead  
who fell to your quick charm.

And oh, you charmed  
me, didn't you,  
and didn't I fall

among those others  
left behind, your  
cons now done,

as you count the payoff  
that consists in this,  
my visible, blind grief  
attesting to your powers.

## A LATER SONG FOR MY FATHER

For a while you were borne aloft  
by songs ... I too,  
when as a little child  
I rode upon  
your shoulders. Vibrations  
from your depths ran up my body  
while you walked, your song  
suffused with the power of men  
who march for the cause of right.  
And "On the Road to Mandalay,"  
rang out full baritone  
as your voice took on more energy.

We quickened to your voice  
and the song-world that you made  
enclosed us both.

Your life within the songs  
sustained you for a time.  
At last you only lived in them.  
Though I took you for a man of strength.  
How frail you really were.

Oh little one, my father-child,  
I want to hold you close, I want  
to carry you and sing a later song  
for you, I want your life to bear  
its blooming flowers like the azaleas  
in my yard this spring.

WHEN ORPHEUS' DEATH CAME FIRST:  
EURYDICE'S SONG

I send my voice through the hard translucent  
wall of time  
and I call you back.

Oh come!  
You shall not wander dead  
piping with cold and glittering eyes,

Eyes cold with the Death whose beat you're piping to  
as I call unheard.

Hear my voice through  
the hard translucent wall of time!  
My cries will cut a door  
back to the world. Oh come.

## MY MOTHER

Mother, I channeled  
your unheard voice.  
The lostness in your life  
was here in mine  
when as a child  
I stumbled  
on my lost, dark way.

Your voice that no one heard,  
the rage and lies  
you hid from everyone,  
were the voice I heard  
in my early life.  
My confusion was yours,  
as I plodded along  
seeking the happy end  
you couldn't find.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS LITTLE GIRL

Here's a mink tippet,  
elegant and costly,  
a very nice gift for a four-year-old.

I cry, I fling it off.

What's the matter with the child?  
Does she think it's alive?  
Does she think it will bite?  
Is she afraid of the fake glass eyes?  
Put it on, child.

I cry again.  
I know it's not alive, I know it's dead.  
I saw death in the woods one time,  
a squirrel on the ground, so still.  
Mother said, "It's dead. Like sleep,  
and you don't wake up."  
I can't forget  
what surely is the most awful thing,  
never to move again.

Why this atrocity,  
why wear death around my neck?

## OH VOYAGER, MY SON

And what did I transit to you,  
oh voyager who trusted me  
beyond my worth or strength?

Summoned from nowhere, all unasked,  
sweet child you struggled in your difficult birth  
to reach the air.

Later, a daring cosmonaut  
when you first stepped forth  
into the insubstantial air,  
falling, standing up again,  
heading to the port  
of my outstretched hands.  
You were so proud.

Alas, my past,  
that shed its darkness over you.



INTIMATIONS OF MORTALITY  
(With apologies to Wordsworth)

## COLLOQUY

Standing one stair below me  
she pulls from behind on the tails of my jacket.  
Weave a story around me  
the old woman mutters.

I don't know you old woman  
your face is so doughy, your body  
disgusting.  
Let go of my jacket  
let go of my life.

I can't shake her loose. Only wordweave me lovely  
she's saying, just send me to gleam  
in the gathering night.

Old woman, old woman,  
tell how I could word you  
in shimmer and gold,  
how clothe you in starshine,  
in moondust and silver?

I can't shake her loose.  
Only wordweave me lovely  
the old woman mutters.

## SAMSARA AND THE LIMITLESS

For a long time I saw the Wheel  
in many dreams.  
I'd come upon it turning in the night.,  
lit up against the dark,  
turning round, lights on its rim.  
There were long intervals  
when I thought it gone for good,  
then in another dream I'd find it  
once again around a corner.

Now it's never there.

I came to see  
that even if I lived again  
and many times, these many lives  
would run along set world lines.  
I tired of that. But still  
I tried on fantasies  
of living many lives.

I was you, and you ...

still clinging to the Wheel,  
my mind beguiled  
by curiosity, envy, habitude.

Weariness now eats me.  
I am ready, I no longer cling.

I await the limitless.

MEMO: DOCTOR DEATH TO A BUTTERFLY

You, butterfly  
you look like a rainbow.

Butterfly,  
you drive me to jabbing  
at rainbows.

Your transcendence is pointless,  
your gaiety diseased.

Look at death.

I, Doctor Death,  
have the cure for all ills.

## BETWEEN WORLDS

On the hill crest,  
my silhouette and the hill's  
against the night sky.

Incandescent,  
my body drifts  
becomes night vapor  
settling on grass.

I trace my way  
just visible between worlds  
fading, fading  
faded, gone

SCENE FROM A ONE-TIME ECOSYSTEM IN THE SONORA DESERT

Wisps of cigarette smoke  
from the window of a passing car  
blow over my dry land  
where there's no other life.  
My kin and I are cactus skeletons,  
Saguaro relics of a former cactus forest  
of the past, where birds came,  
and little creatures used to live  
at my base.

With a silent cry from my dried-up trunk  
my skeletal arms reach out  
to the empty sky.

## MESSAGE TO ME

Here it is  
'the golden thread once more,  
when I least expected it.

In the blackness  
there was a little space  
where the thread lay coiled.

I believe  
that who I am will return to me.

May my own voice  
reach over years to me now.

FRESH WINDS: A LARGER SYMPHONY

An Existential Poem-Drama  
(copyright May 2001)

Poet:

I cannot find the song  
that pulsed my flowering  
so surely  
despite Procrustes' bed,  
and giants hungering  
to make a tasty dish of me.

But here I am  
never mind them all,  
and I wonder why  
and is it worth the purse  
of costly passions that I spent  
along the way?

Oh, wherever can I find  
fresh winds  
to spin me toward tomorrow?

Demons:

Life's luxuriant with waste  
of songs, of flowers opening  
to no end but withering.

Angels:

Everything is song,  
is pulse, is rhythm that we celebrate!



Ex-Christians:

Our songs are all so blasted with percussive pain  
that only a tough old God could listen,  
His awareness dulled  
millennia ago from many screams.  
Back when men were easily duped  
... think of Noah, think of Job ...  
they waited for a larger symphony  
that would in God's own time  
show the fierce chord-changes all resolved

Alchemists:

Fumes from our retorts  
lead to a swirl of visions in our heads.  
As we do our work,  
anesthetic beautiful images  
say that alchemy can distill  
from gross matter  
heated and vaporized once again  
and many times,  
the Christ spirit as Philosophers' Gold.

Oh yes, man's plodding pain  
treads round its daily wheel  
beyond all earthly hopes

but we alchemists can liberate  
from mere matter put to fire  
pure spirit as the distillate  
that leads to a golden Heaven.

Karl Marx:

I say, sky pie!

Alchemists:

Fumes from our retorts  
lead to a swirl of visions in our heads.  
As we do our work,  
anesthetic beautiful images from mere matter put to fire  
pure spirit as the distillate  
that leads to a golden Heaven.

Karl Marx:

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Orphans:

We have praised a psychopathic Deity  
    into thinking Himself wise and good.  
Now he's the dupe  
and we, His children long abused,  
come into our majority.  
    We must lock Him away  
from doing more abuse.  
... And where's our mother, Mrs. God?

Feminists:

He says there never was a Mrs. God,  
says he made Eve and Adam by Himself.  
Silly dotard!  
He forgets, when He was younger  
He was in a snit about Her worshippers,  
Her priestesses and priests,  
and he smote them all.

Angels:

Hush, everything is song  
and there's a larger symphony ...

Bombs Over Kosovo:

Our song is death  
drop, blast, and death  
drop  
    blast  
        and death.

Ex-Angels:

I wonder why,  
and is it worth the purse  
of costly passions that we spent  
along the way?  
You humans still don't get it, do you.  
Former angels study Sartre nowadays,  
and we're here to tell you,  
songs and singing are your job,

not ours.  
Go write the larger symphony yourself.

Waste Brokers, Wakening:  
We fused toxic pain with glass  
and sent it down a shaft  
cut deep in a mountain.

We put warning signs  
on the earth above.  
Nobody heeded them,  
no one can read them now.

Deep in the earth  
tectonic plates are on the move.  
From the glass  
pain seeps  
creeps up the shaft  
and wraps us in its fumes.

The gleaming poisoned eyes  
of many lives  
swirl round us in these fumes,  
passing down  
the distilled toxicities  
of generations.

And what are we to do?

Mutations so they say  
grow eyes all over us  
where there were never eyes before.

God:

What's going on?  
How can I get my beauty rest  
amidst this chattering?  
Hush up, go back to singing hymns,  
especially slow ones  
that pay compliments to Me.  
It reduces stress you know.  
Ubiquity is pretty taxing, keeping track

of everything on lots of worlds.

Ex-Christians:

You're superfluous. Drop dead,  
You bit off more than You could chew.  
We'll never miss You.

God:

Never miss Me?  
Blasphemy! I'll strike you down.

Everyone:

You already did. There's nothing more  
that you can do to us.

God:

Good grief, I'm shriveling  
liked a pricked balloon.  
I pray to Me, save Me!

Everyone:

There's nobody home, old man,  
We'll all go "poof," and off You go.

God:

I'm shriveling, there's nothing left  
of me ... my voice is just a squeak ...  
squeak squee squee eeee ...

Poet:

Did I hear squeaks just now ...

Everyone:

They're getting faint ...

God:

eee eee, eee ee, ee e  
e ... e ...

...

Poet, Reborn:

Fresh winds are blowing on this grassy plain,

such beautiful whorls of air  
are spinning toward tomorrow.  
Come  
spin away.

Additional poem, separate to the 'Lemon and Honey' book:

### THE RED FEELING

Exquisite large moth of profound and wondrous red,  
wide wing span, delicate and strong,  
flies into my room.

The child within me says  
to cage it, keep it here.

No, I say.

Remember what happened once before.  
Caging such beauty destroys it.  
Last time it died  
within the week.

Wild beauty must fly free.  
Let it find its way itself,  
to come or go, to stay or die.