


Paems

by

Barbara
Burrows



considering the lilies

there was a time when perfection meant
that all the threaded details of my tiny sphere
would neatly fit, in all their woven tightness
and miniscule importance, within some vast
fabricated sense of things,
so that my daily garment would appear,
somehow pieced together,
and I would be *clothed!*

what vanity! clothed indeed!
since when did the creator ask for
my tiny sphere as pattern for His
vastness and possibilities?
that tiny sphere of details and plans
was nothing but busy knots and
snarls of self-importance!

oh, unwind! re-weave!

expand into the vastness of knowing
that there are no loose threads of isolation
too busy or too tight to break
for the possibility of *e x p a n d i n g*
into that

SEAMLESS GARMENT – the pattern
He has fashioned in His wisdom

– the pattern
that custom fits each one of us
– the pattern

snug enough for comfort,
loose enough for freedom,
and so beautiful

that we are, indeed,

(considering the lilies)
gloriously arrayed in His majesty!

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Elijah Assured

...even after standing firm in King Ahab's presence
knowing his own magnitude as God's messenger, God's seer:
(assured by the promise of authority)
...even after being sustained by the humble obedience
of the widow woman with her daily handful
of meal and a little oil:
(assured by the promise of abundance)
...even after raising her precious son from death:
(assured by the promise of Life)
...even after proving Baal barren—
the altar, bullock, wood, water—all consumed—
erased, even down to the stones and the dust:
(assured by the Promise of all promises)

Still, he fled for his life to the empty wilderness,
willing to die.
And, still, the assurance was there!

Quietly penetrating the turmoil of his thought
that gentle question came:

"What doest thou here, Elijah?"

And from the turmoil of his thought, the answer

"I only am left..."

And the response? Simply the gentle, calm command,

"Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord."

Go forth? Where, after all those travels?

Why, UP! Up to the uplifted thought of God!

nearer than any king's palace
widow's home
barren, scorched altar
or wilderness brook.

Go forth—UP to the vast mount within!

And what passed by in that holy place?

Oh, rest assured that God stayed on - stood by, firm as the
everlasting hills

while the

great and strong wind that tore at
matter's mountains never touched the calm
prophet on the mount

while the

earthquake threatened to shake the very
foundations of matter's so-called earth

while the

fire threatened to consume whatever was
left of the debris

that stillness stayed on!

And when assured that God's stillness could not fail,
he returned to the wilderness
ready

to know the still, small voice that would
ROAR its answer to his now-meek thought.

For only the depth of his own stillness could know
the volume of that Voice!

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a prayer
that you will pass on your road
the young and the old
and see neither youth nor age--
but greet in both
their youth of strength
and their age of wisdom

a prayer
that you will greet them, then,
as ageless brother-souls,
all of you passing greetings
of strength and of wisdom

and a prayer
that your day of birth
be celebrated
that you had no beginning
nor ending

so that your mirror
shows you not
images of dust
but
faces of eternity!

and now,
truly, the transparency of what
you are
shines like a light
through what you never were.

deeper than surface courtesy
of social forgiveness
broader than the courage
to admit my own
past inabilities and
shortcomings
and
wider than the vast love
that I feel for you
that could cover
any distance

is the realization,
yes, the revelation
that we have always been loved
and understood each other
and loved each other.

vastly stronger than
"my love for you" or
"your love for me"
is our love for each other
and our love for we as "us"

for in that marriage is no contest.
for you see, I've only just begun
to realize that marriage is not
two people singing songs to each other,
but two hearts singing the most
joyous duet,
each ear tuned to the other, so as to
blend in harmony, but remaining
distinctly radiant!

the garment

he gives her his love
and she wears it

and they say:
how beautifully his love
becomes her!

it is a garment
given with the
tenderness of beginnings

woven with the
gentleness of dawn

worn in the glow of
full noontide happiness

and in the
quiet restfulness of
evening peace:

an eternal garment
worn forever
in a timeless day
of
eternal light!

"Hey, man, where you comin' from?"

When collisions of confusion
and misunderstanding ruled my days,
and those I held so dear
seemed distant or unsure,
the same hypnotic question kept
repeating and repeating,

"Hey, man, where you comin' from?"

Then, gently, to my searching
thought came this--
a message that repeated and repeated--
gentler, but more insistent that
the first:

"Why believe man comes from anywhere?"

Of course!

I see so clearly now
that man is not a dim, unguided star,
revolving in vague, uncharted orbits,
propelled from
crowded "here"
to distant "there"
by human will.

To see this is to know
that man dwells in a universe
where collisions
are impossible!

The course charted for him
is carefully mapped--
planned and guided--
calculated
on the chart of Wisdom
that focuses on the
here and now of
true reality--
not on obscure dreams and remote promises
of weak mortals,
never to be fulfilled.

• He shares his "here and now"
knowing only
that each "here to there"
was progressive joy

knowing only
that no past "there" to
present "here"
could make him
distant or unsure

knowing only his place
as a radiant star
in the
universal crown of rejoicing!

i see you with my eye
but i sense you
with my soul

and how to
measure you
i know not.

often, i may have
poured forth
into your soul
more than you
could bear.

please forgive.

the flow of the heart
should be
a river
whose banks
never overflow
with thoughtless tides
of needless chatter

but a
gentle stream
of quiet waters
 flowing clearly,
 quietly,
 with a soft current.

"master, where dwellest thou?....he saith, come and see." (john 1:38,39)
"press on. the way is narrow at first, but it expands as we walk in it"
(my. 202:27)

thou dwellest not in straight street!
thou movest on the broad/narrow path
leading always up ward, outward.
thy path leadeth to many mansioned dwellings.

"When ye enter a house, salute it"

thou hast a dwelling
broad and wide
for thou hast gathered
light inside!

the elements of
earth are gone:
the promised glow
from them lives on

as if to gently
soothe thy soul,
their beauty whispers:
thou art whole!

for only wholeness
can behold
creative light,
and love enfold.

and all the things
within thy sphere
that thou hast gathered
year by year

from far-off place
and distant land
with careful, thoughtful
love-filled hand

are head-crowned
ornaments of grace
that teach thee
wisdom face to face

that thou might feel
at journey's end
the welcome of thy
thy home, dear friend!

my life's too full
and so is yours
to think of life
as only waiting

sitting by
a window sill
with tear-filled eyes
anticipating

that vague someday
when all is right
and all the pieces
neatly fit

because we've learned
to tolerate
each other's flaws
with shallow wit.

can humor file
the edges down
to fit square peg
in rounded hole?

can juggling
of "yours" and "mine"
or willingness
to play a role

replace the need
to really be
just right for you
just right for me?

the scorn and sneer
and bitter sting
of judging you
can never ring

the chimes of joy
within my heart:
I only want
your heart to sing!

and could it sing
if scorned and teased
or taunted, twisted,
forced to please

a fruitless joy
or selfish ease
that never fills
itself or me?

no sly deceit
will make me feel
that I could take
your song from you

that song is yours--
to give it space
is surest way
of loving you.

our deepest need
is this: to know
that we are loved,
and feel it so!

the prisoner

the one walled in----condemned...
and how shall we define those walls?

the walls are the hardness of hearts,
the deliberate separation of soul from soul
by those who claim to determine
who shall be guiltless

think you, friend, this prisoner
is a prisoner you know not?

unless you stir yourself
and leave your prison,
you will take it with you,
and insist,
because of it,
that all are prisoners
like yourself.

so you will not touch another
without seeing him

sentenced.

walled in.

condemned.

and, indeed, until all prisons
are dissolved in memory
of the heart,
it matters not how many walls
made of bricks
are torn down

since a soul
is a prisoner
only
when the heart,
indeed,

allows it.

Today I came to your back door
climbing over
the short, friendly hedge
that divides our houses

today I came to your back door
returning something borrowed,
or borrowing yet again---
which it was, I remember not.

today I came to your back door,
remembering how that hedge
needed clipping, and thinking,
"I must remember that task."

today, I came to your back door
with thoughts of hedges
and thoughts of things borrowed,
but returned home with deeper thoughts

today I came to your back door
and re-discovered myself
by learning of true borrowing
and true returning

I cannot borrow your sympathy--
it would weigh too much.
I could not carry it home
across the friendly hedge

but I can share a worry
when it is bathed in your compassion;
for your compassion is lightness,
and lightens my worry.

today I came to your back door
and returned, promising myself
to trim the ledge on my side,
and to thank you for always
having your side trimmed!
