

Love
is a song she sang
from a cage

Bianca
Bowers



Love is a song she sang from a Cage

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For

L'oiseau chanteur

To

Sa liberté

Poems

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Caged



Love is a song

Love is a song
she sang from a cage

Her mahogany eyes cast expressionist shadows
that drew me into her noir mise en scène
where her voice lingered like a spirit in purgatory
where she sang her songs, a book of stories burdened
with blue,
night after night.

I kissed her pomegranate lips,
hummed her vintage tune
 until it rattled the ribs of my soul.

I stroked her feathery fingers,
 let her strum my acoustic heart strings.

I sipped her voice
 until I changed colour,
 like a thousand raindrops on copper.

Her darkness was a bulb that lit the room,
and I chain-smoked her sadness like the menthol
cigarettes I snuck at sixteen.

She was a songbird in a world of noise,
a bruise of a girl in a world of collisions,
a silhouette in the ether.

I longed to be those wounded words
that sibilated on her tongue
that entered the raw atmosphere, like newborns.
I longed to catch them, like butterflies in a net,
to nurse them back to health,
for they were as tender as those secrets
hidden in my deepest pockets.

I made love to her like a spirit without a body,
cradled her like a wounded sparrow,
drank her tears like bourbon.

I slept inside the universal truth of her song,
willed the music to haunt my dreams at night,

and, when I woke
I was floating above love, looking down at it,
like a bird
freed from its cage.

City

I hid a city
beneath my skin
grew dandelions in my head

so I could blow those wispy sails
like kisses,
wishes on the wind,

willing you to hear the voices calling you
closer to my church
to climb under my fate

share my pulse
love me between the shadows
until we eclipsed.

You always had me
at the edge of myself;
a hibiscus trellis

suspended
above brambles
the wind our only accompaniment

scattering seeds

far far

out of reach

travelling in perpetuity

between stars, between seasons

Our hearts beating

on the horizon.

Hummingbird Heart

Clumps of words
line my throat
 like iridescent feathers
but they cannot escape
must remain
silent
says the cage
says the songbird

This song in my heart
cannot be released
for its lyrics
could strip the gold lacquer
adorning my aviary

So I write

I write this music
that has no voice
across my chest
my lips
my breasts
wanting him to read them
in his dreams

So I write

I write these lyrics
that cannot be sung
cannot be carried
by the breath of my lungs
lest they explode
like diesel, kerosine, gasoline - lit

So I write

These words
that cannot be justified
cannot be altered
in meaning
cannot be scribbled over
lest they kill the chorus
of my heart
my hummingbird heart
that was born to sing

Branches

You flicker in front of me
A black and white movie

I dream in circles
kiss a phantom
Choke on the vapour of texts

It can never be enough
to live inside a book
Romance needs oxygen
like fire

And although this fire has been lit
it cannot burn without a body

And I wonder about past lives
If we've met and loved before

For flowers cannot grow without stalks
Yet here I am
preparing the branches in my heart
for Spring

Constant Cravings

You make me want to read. To gorge on words like a starving book worm, or a down and out poet.

You make me want. What I can't have. But I have tasted your words, and now it's constant cravings.

Sliver

I am happy. Content with what I've got. With where I am. Sort of. Mostly.

If I was the moon, I would be a sliver away from full.
One shade away from blood.

Casablanca

We kissed
like Bergman and Bogart
a plane hangar between us

Je t'aime
I whispered
but the wind
stole my words
before they found your ear

and though we embraced like lovers
from another lifetime

it was the last kiss
in Casablanca.

Seasons

I have never excelled with this tree called Love

Only climbed, caressed and fallen from
its branches,

but

like a newly planted sapling in Winter
- dead within the first week -
Love has been seasons
out of sync.

Breakage

I won't deny my heart

My head, maybe

who only understands
halves and breakage

who is trained in politics
and corruption
assassination and lies

but knows nothing of arts
and culture.

Venus

Excuse Venus
while she stores her dreams
beneath a star

Excuse her til then

if then breathes
 inside a constellation
if then is more tangible
than a word -
 a partition
shield
 defence.

You don't think love is
enough
but it's the closest planet
in our solar system

Fingerprints

I am overcome
by this distance
between our skin

the proximity of my heart
to yours
is crushing

and yet

I haven't touched your face
or smelt your cologne

and yet

this exquisite intimacy
this staggering isolation

has the fingerprints of decades

Emptied

I love you

I miss you

I have emptied these words
of meaning

what started as a bookend
for impossible mileage
is hollow and crestfallen
can bring no relief
no satisfaction

for you are there
in the sky

and I am here
in my cage

light years from freedom.

Fight for love

I never thought
to fight for love
after walking away,
disgraced.

I never wanted
to fight for love
until now.

Feathers



Freefall

Reckless

while the moon gathers blood

while my heart is on loan

Restless

to strike that match

while my belly churns

tinder

Beseeching

resurrection

as we freefall

into love.

Upended

I love you
seems so insubstantial
for this cyclone of emotions
that sweep
and consume me

I am the oak tree
upended
the bird fallen
from its nest

and while I don't know
what this is, exactly
I do know
that I love you
is not enough.

Mermaid

You have unleashed a storm
this rain will never stop
it seems
and it has been so long with sunshine
that I don't care

Let that rain pour
torrential
thunder stamping
lightning crackling
Deluge
debauchery
drowning

I want to drown;
Suicidal for a mortal
Salvation for a mermaid

You have given me scales
my love
liberated my very breath
so that I am at home in the ocean
again

I watch the tides gather
like overhanging storm clouds
reaching hysterical crescendo
where stars align
where planets eclipse
where I see the sky
and realise it is not blue
but something else entirely
- a transparent lake edged with silver stars -

Appetite

I cannot eat
cannot sleep
with and without you
I am fucked
fated
foreign

My appetite rages
but not for food
so my weight whittles
I turn nymph-like
like a water sprite
except there is no water in sight
and I am thirsty
so thirsty
my love

Let me drink
let me eat
what I crave
before I wither and die
in this famine
this war of the heart

Let me go
and take me back
turn yourself inside out
for me
because I ask you
for this is what love is

irrational
lawless
irreverent

Be irreverent with me
love
Be faithless
for love
unfaithful
for faith

Let me go
or I may never
return.

Hungry

I am Catherine Tramell
hungry to write,
fucking experience
like an insatiable lover

I set myself alight
so I can burn
feel the sensation
reach hysterical blindness.

Solstice

I'm writing again
because of you

because you saw me
when I couldn't see myself

and I love you
like my copy of *Wuthering Heights*
so tattered and torn
a cherished heirloom of literature

But oh how my heart sobs over this mileage
that separates
Cathy from her Heathcliff

Fill my head
with question marks
while I write love poems
for a fictional lover
while I dream of us
reading, laughing, talking
beyond twilight
Your velvet voice
reading an entire library

nights, mornings, days
filled
with intoxicating words
this shared language
this magic and mystery
that flickers like a fairy's wand

Let me dream
before these moth wings
disintegrate in morning dew

Ask me that question
that hopeless question
before we say goodbye

Goodbye
the only thing I hate about you,
when you abandon me
in those hours of silence
Lovers' hours
that tick between tidal clocks
indifferently
cruelly
selfishly

And although you try to reassure me
by omitting that word
goodbye
Goodbye it is as Shakespeare well knew
Parting is such sweet sorrow
when the sweetness sours
and the sorrow sinks like solstice

My initial hope
that bird of infinite possibility
that flapped its wings
when my heart woke at sunrise
is flying overhead
so high, I cannot reach it
feet buried
eyes in heaven
watching it fly over
like a jet plane
I have missed

And I want to weep
want to write science fiction
and time travel to you

But we may never be

my love...

a night emptied of stars

a moon without rocks

an ocean without tides

a death without a body

Reincarnation

Cruel love, I didn't ask
for a funeral in the rain

I am strong
but not invincible

Don't reincarnate yourself like this, love
love
love...

Without You

Today, I am exiguous
I am semi-circles
and sickle moons
Upside down, without you.

Craving proximity
intimacy with love
the kind that turns water into wine
sex into love
atoms into molecules

Today, my wings are horns
and Lucifer is closer than God
That picture of you, that I keep
is not enough
of a substitute
for your lips
bruising skin,
your gaze reflecting,
your words in my mouth.

Today, I am fire
at its most vicious
White hot love

straight from the furnace
You can't touch me
hell, I can't touch me
I've moved beyond colour
into shades of ghost

I am lost

I am found

I will never find my way back
and simultaneously home
in your eyes
in the jagged creases of your words
where you rock my heart in your palm

Today, I am here

I am there

everywhere

nowhere

Circling the globe

like a lovesick nomad

I am fear

I am not afraid

of you

of me

of us

Petals so red
they saturate my blood
with courage
Imbibe me
put a wreath around my neck
take me to an island
and fuck me
until this madness runs clear

Because today
I am exiguous
Scissored sunshine
orphaned rainbow
cosmic confusion
without you.

Island

I'm on an island
love
dreaming a while

Me and you
the hands on our wrists
in sync

Tracing your lips with a
look
loving you under the moonlight

I'm on an island tonight
love
dream with me

END OF SAMPLE

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