

**Serenata**

*Poems by Mark Van Doren*

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**[1] If I had a wife**

If I had a wife  
I would love her as kings  
Loved queens in the old days, or as princes  
Maidens,  
Met in the dew, by a stile, of a morning—  
"How do you do, my pretty?"  
And all of that.

If I had a wife  
I would come home sometimes  
Dressed like a stranger, and when she stared,  
"Lady,"  
I'd say, and woo her in wonder—  
"How can there be such shining?"  
And all of that.

If I had a wife  
I would never be done  
With remembering how it is now when, oh,  
I am lonesome,  
And no one is here but my dog and my cat—  
"Well, old boys! Hungry?"  
And all of that.

**[2] Her hand in my hand**

Her hand in my hand,  
Soft as the south wind,  
Soft as a colt's nose,  
Soft as forgetting;

Her cheek to my cheek,  
Red as the cranberry,  
Red as a mitten,  
Red as remembering—  
Here we go round like raindrops,  
Raindrops,  
Here we go round  
So snug together,

Oh, but I wonder,  
Oh, but I know,  
Who comforts like raisins,  
Who kisses like snow.

**[3] Little Trip**

Let's go. Let's be somewhere awhile  
We haven't ever been before;  
And strangers cut the random grass  
Or leave it ragged. That can pass;  
For now the road climbs more and more,  
And we are silent mile by mile  
Between whose woods? We'll never know  
Unless we stop to read his name.  
Up and over, down and on  
Around this mountain, blue then brown.  
Here is a river, wild or tame  
According as the rocks below  
Be few or many. Next a house,  
And neat or not we like it well,  
For someone else does all the chores  
Or doesn't do them. Churches, stores—  
There, I heard the crossing bell.  
So home by dark to moth and mouse.

**[4] Desire Like This**

So long had he withheld his hands,  
She found him slow to learn:  
The way a breast, a thigh, can yield;  
The way snow can burn.

You thought me once a goddess, boy,  
And so I am, she said;  
Desire like this is not of earth:  
More, and we both were dead.

Oh, no, he cried; but even then,  
Like one brand ablaze,  
They broke and fell, and each went out  
As stars extinguish days.

**[5] Love me little, love me long**

Love me little, love me long,  
Then we neither can be wrong:  
You in giving, I in taking;  
There is not a heart breaking  
But remembers one touch,  
Or maybe seven, of too much.

Love me more than halfway, though.  
Let me think, then let me know.  
And I promise you the same:  
A little wild, a little tame;  
Lest it ever seem long:  
Tick, tock, ding, dong.

**Sunday Songs**

*Poems by Emily Dickinson*

**[6] I. Oriole**

To hear an Oriole sing  
May be a common thing—  
Or only a divine.

It is not of the Bird  
Who sings the same, unheard,  
As unto Crowd—

The Fashion of the Ear  
Attireth that it hear  
In Dun, or fair—

So whether it be Rune,  
Or whether it be none  
Is of within.

The "Tune is in the Tree—"  
The Sceptic—showeth me—  
"No Sir! In Thee!"

**[7] II. Keeping the Sabbath**

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—  
I keep it, staying at Home—  
With a Bobolink for a Chorister—  
And an Orchard for a Dome—

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—  
I just wear my Wings—  
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,  
Our little Sexton—sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman—  
And the sermon is never long,  
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—  
I'm going, all along.

**Heaven and Earth: Four Songs of William Blake**

*Poems by William Blake*

**[8] I. Night**

The sun descending in the west,  
The evening star does shine;  
The birds are silent in their nest,  
And I must seek for mine.  
The moon like a flower  
In heaven's high bower,  
With silent delight  
Sits and smiles on the night.  
(*Alleluia.*)

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,  
Where flocks have took delight.  
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves  
The feet of angels bright;  
Unseen they pour blessing  
And joy without ceasing,  
On each bud and blossom.  
(*Alleluia.*)

They look in every thoughtless nest,  
Where birds are cover'd warm;  
They visit caves of every beast,  
To keep them all from harm.  
If they see any weeping  
That should have been sleeping,  
They pour sleep on their head,  
And sit down by their bed.  
(*Alleluia.*)

When wolves and tygers howl for prey,  
They pitying stand and weep;  
Seeking to drive their thirst away,  
And keep them from the sheep;  
But if they rush dreadful,  
The angels, most heedful,  
Receive each mild spirit,  
New worlds to inherit.  
(*Alleluia.*)

**[9] II. The Little Vagabond**

Dear Mother, dear Mother, the Church is cold,  
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;  
Besides I can tell where I am used well,  
Such usage in Heaven will never do well.  
But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,  
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,  
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day,  
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach, and drink, and sing,  
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;  
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at Church,  
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.  
And God, like a father, rejoicing to see  
His children as pleasant and happy as He,  
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel,  
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.

**[10] III. Holy Thursday**

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,  
The children walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green:  
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,  
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.  
*Kyrie Eleison*

O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!  
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.  
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,

Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.  
*Kyrie Eleison*

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,  
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among:  
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;  
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.  
*Kyrie Eleison*

**[11] IV. O for a voice like thunder**

O for a voice like thunder, and a tongue  
To drown the throat of war!—When the senses  
Are shaken, and the soul is driven to madness,  
Who can stand? When the souls of the oppressed  
Fight in the troubled air that rages, who can stand?  
When the whirlwind of fury comes from the  
Throne of God, when the frowns of his countenance  
Drive the nations together, who can stand?  
When Sin claps his broad wings over the battle,  
And sails rejoicing in the flood of Death;  
When souls are torn to everlasting fire,  
And fiends of Hell rejoice upon the slain,  
O who can stand? O who hath caused this?  
O who can answer at the throne of God?

**Singing To Sleep**

*Texts not available*

**[12] I. To Say to Go to Sleep**

*Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke & Randall Jarrell*

**[13] II. Lullaby**

*Poems by Wystan Hugh Auden*

**[14] Litany**

*Poem by Billy Collins*

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*You are the bread and the knife,  
The crystal goblet and the wine.  
- Jacques Crickillon*

You are the bread and the knife,  
the crystal goblet and the wine,  
You are the dew on the morning grass,  
and the burning wheel of the sun.  
You are the white apron of the baker  
and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.

However, you are not the wind in the orchard.  
the plums on the counter,  
or the house of cards.  
And you are certainly not the pine-scented air.  
There is no way you are the pine-scented air.

It is possible that you are the fish under the bridge,  
maybe even the pigeon on the general's head,  
but you are not even close  
to being the field of cornflowers at dusk.

And a quick look in the mirror will show  
that you are neither the boots in the corner  
nor the boat asleep in its boathouse.

It might interest you to know,  
speaking of the plentiful imagery of the world,  
that I am the sound of rain on the roof,  
I also happen to be the shooting star,  
the evening paper blowing down an alley,  
and the basket of chestnuts on the kitchen table.

I am also the moon in the trees  
and the blind woman's teacup.  
But don't worry, I am not the bread and the knife,

You are still the bread and the knife.  
You will always be the bread and the knife,  
not to mention the crystal goblet and—somehow—the wine.

**Wasting the Night**

*Poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay*

**[15] I. Thursday**

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And if I loved you Wednesday,  
Well, what is that to you?  
I do not love you Thursday—  
So much is true.

And why you come complaining  
Is more than I can see.  
I loved you Wednesday,—yes—but what  
Is that to me?

**[16] II. Recuerdo**

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We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable—  
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,  
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;  
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,  
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;  
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,  
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
We hailed, "Good morrow, mother!" to a shawl-covered head,  
And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;  
And she wept, "God bless you!" for the apples and pears,  
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

**[17] III. I shall forget you**

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I shall forget you presently, my dear,  
So make the most of this, your little day,  
Your little month, your little half a year,  
Ere I forget, or die, or move away,  
And we are done forever; by and by  
I shall forget you, as I said, but now,  
If you entreat me with your loveliest lie  
I will protest you with my favourite vow.  
I would indeed that love were longer-lived,  
And oaths were not so brittle as they are,  
But so it is, and nature has contrived  
To struggle on without a break thus far,—  
Whether or not we find what we are seeking  
Is idle, biologically speaking.

**[18] IV. Time does not bring relief**

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Time does not bring relief; you all have lied  
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!  
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;  
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;  
The old snows melt from every mountainside,  
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;  
But last year's bitter loving must remain  
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.  
There are a hundred places where I fear  
To go, —so with his memory they brim.  
And entering with relief some quiet place  
Where never fell his foot or shone his face  
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"  
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

**[19] V. The Betrothal**

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Oh, come, my lad, or go, my lad,  
And love me if you like.  
I shall not hear the door shut  
Nor the knocker strike.

Oh, bring me gifts or beg me gifts,  
And wed me if you will.  
I'd make a man a good wife,  
Sensible and still.

And why should I be cold, my lad,  
And why should you repine,  
Because I love a dark head  
That never will be mine?

I might as well be easing you  
As lie alone in bed  
And waste the night in wanting  
A cruel dark head.

You might as well be calling yours  
What never will be his,  
And one of us be happy.  
There's few enough as is.

**[20] Mozart, 1935**

*Poems by Wallace Stevens*

*Text not available*

**Turning Back**

*Poems by H.D. [Hilda Doolittle]*

*Texts not available*

**[21] I. Aubade**

**[22] II. Circe**

**[23] III. Lethe**

**[24] IV. Eurydice**