

At Least To Me & other poems...

By Sandra Kolankiewicz

Poetry editor Hezekiah writes...

Wow! I couldn't write this stuff, I'm lucky to be able to read it. There is no earthly reason to quote a single line for 'At Least to Me.' ...We just have to experience it for ourselves " whether we're clay or air." ...So I lied. 'What Was a Dream,' sentimental fools and one-sided redolent reminiscences. And, 'Every Year Since Then,' " I have hiked / and run and pedaled until I've come to / accept all moments are different and / the same,..." (Spacing and font size are poet's own.)HS

Every Year Since Then

I cannot tell you how happy I am
to remember this day spent together:
the early morning up the hill, finding
the stream that trickled down, following it,
what happened at the bottom. I have hiked
and run and pedaled until I've come to
accept all moments are different and
the same, and no matter how hard you push,
you cannot escape others, must come to
understand no matter what happens, one
tries to belong. That's the secret no one
tells: you're not alone. Hard to imagine
when the creek's rising and your engine has
stalled, not the kind of day we sat and watched
the osprey circling endlessly before
they landed as if afraid to arrive,
yet every year since then, they have returned.

What Was a Dream

How astounding still to remember how
 I lay awake for you, wondering why

you left me unanswered in the way of
 an old song. I married someone else, had

four children, managed well enough, better
 than some, and then your call today, wanting

to meet in a hotel bar, needing at
 last to tell me what I'd asked twenty years

ago, whether you'd be my Valentine,
 when you pretended not to hear, though I'd

wrapped myself around you at the time, spoke
 into your ear, too much life between then

and now to consider, beloved stranger
 come too late, having missed what a was dream.

At Least to Me

We all have a unique vibration from before we were born, continuing when we die. This movement of trough and wave has nothing to do with our bodies; in fact, its nature changes moment to moment. Because our tone is the same as our self, resonance is what we are, even the frequencies we don't hear, which move through us whether we're clay or air. We recognize each other in the spectrum where we lose our particles like shedding our skin, not sound nor light, though sometimes I can I feel you, there, at the edge of your universe as you look toward mine. If I had fingers I'd trace the line of your cheek as a lover might, cup the back of your head in my hand while I support your neck as a mother would, protect you from the darkness like a sister. The flying v of Canada geese above calls silently in a world with no gravity, movement in a vacuum needing something to resist in order to be heard, strife merely a part of a life more important where you always fit in and can never be lost. How do I become a pond with fat striped bass rising to the surface for the May flies on the water? Can the soft crab that turns his mate around penetrate her without knowing her name? Just thinking of the ocean makes me coil inside like a spring waiting for some moment I'll always search but never see, death impossible, at least to me.

THE POET SPEAKS: *At the time I wrote “At Least to Me,” my mother was dying. She was afraid to discuss the kinds of things many of us might want to talk about with loved ones when we sense our lives are coming to an end. Instead, she kept asking when she was going to get better. At that time, when I wrote this poem, I posted it on Facebook for a couple of days to kind of try it out with some of my poet friends. We often do that with one another. My mother had a Facebook account she hardly used because she would click on something and get lost. However, after I posted this poem, I saw that she put a heart (loved) below it. I think it’s the only time she successfully commented on anything I posted. So I think we communicated about her dying after all, just sideways, which is one of the safe and wonderful things that poetry, like music, can do.*

“What Was a Dream” is my friend’s story. She did go meet him because he sounded so sad when he called, and he was there, wanting to just throw the past twenty years away and start over. She said the experience made her a little mournful and conflicted, so I imagined I were in her place, and this poem is what I came up with. I don’t think trying to recreate the life from your youth is unusual for middle aged folks, when all our doors are closing. I am just glad I am not the guy!

“Every Year since Then” is about patterns, how we think we understand what happens to us—and then with time we begin to see our life in a greater perspective. This poem is about how we absolutely need other people and have to learn to get along with others. This crazy COVID has showed us how connected we are—and how lonely we can become. The osprey are us, coming in to build a nest, realizing we can be committed and safe even though we are wild and vulnerable.

AUTHOR’S BIO: My poems have appeared widely, most recently in *One, Otis Nebulae, Galway Review, Trampset, Concho River Review, London Magazine, New World Writing* and *Appalachian Heritage*. *Turning Inside Out* was published by Black Lawrence. Finishing Line has released *The Way You Will Go* and *Lost in Transition*.

