

The Best Lover

Poems by

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The Best Lover

I tell every man I'm with
that he's the best lover
I've ever had

He always believes me

I feel if he asks me, then
that's the only answer
he wants to hear

And somehow at that
moment after love-making

I almost believe it myself

Maybe it's not so different
from when someone asks you
which of your books
do you think is your best

And you almost always answer
it's my most recent

What I Don't Believe

What I don't believe is
that at my age on J-Date
that men that send me an e-mail
will be good-looking
The most you can say is
"I can see that they were once good-looking"
that most of the photos
are from 10 years ago
and when you finally meet a man
for coffee or brunch or possibly
if they have a more generous bent
for dinner, they will not look like their
photos but more wrinkled, more bald, grayer
Most of the men 5' 6" inches will be more like 5' 3" inches
and only contact women 5' 2" inches and under
Most of the women will lie about their
weight: 140 states 124

"How old is your photo?"
my new date asks
I don't want to tell him
it's 25 years old
"The middle one is more recent,"
I say. (I don't say it's
a decade old and was
flattering even then)

During dinner a man will
leave for the men's room
often—at least twice
Almost all the men have prostate
issues though they don't mention it

My date asks me: "Do you
get a mammogram every year?"
He has his own fears

about a woman's health
"Do you have any health problems?"
I'm asked
"No," I say and often don't mention
a health scare I had twelve years ago—
though sometimes I do

On the first J-Date at coffee
"How much do you weigh?"
my date asks me
"How much money do you have?"
he asks

"How long has it been since you've had sex?"
"Why did you get divorced?" he continues
"Who left whom?"
"How much do you weigh?"

Living Together

for Gregory Corso

I lived with Gregory for a year
or rather he lived with me
And though it was only a year
it seemed like twenty
At night on my brown velvet sofa
he would write in his Chinese red silk
embroidered covered journal
with his brown ink Mont Blanc pen
that he had asked me to buy for him
and to get one for myself(though I never did)
The TV would be on and in memory always
tuned to a baseball game—
In the mornings we would make the run to Christie Street
for him to pick up what he needed to survive the day—
At this point I was on a hopeless mission to get him to stop
to get rid of his years of bad habits
I was wearing my invisible Wonder Woman cape
but I was never successful like Wonder Woman
Sometimes we would go out to Maxwell's Plum but
he could never sit for more than half the lunch
He took me to see the movie *Napoleon* but we only
stayed for half (it was incredibly long)
He stayed in my apartment and painted a self-portrait of himself
He kept changing the face—even once made himself black—
He had the skyline of San Francisco behind him
He painted a portrait of his friend Kerouac—
He painted a portrait of me and my eyes turquoise though
they are green and even made the sky turquoise
He made me look like a bitch—but the colors were beautiful
We went to San Francisco to find an apartment
but came back to New York when we were called
that Ted Berrigan had died—
There was never, I realize, a chance that we would make it
We were like a fragile, fragrant homemade candle—
its slight flickering wick
just waiting for the oncoming tsunami wave to blow it out.

Last Trip

My lover's body has been in the morgue on ice
for three months
It is time for him to be buried or cremated—
Still, at this time there is no legal way to do this
I, his companion of 23 years, have no legal right
His cousins he hated, his heirs, have no legal rights
My love has no children—an only child himself, no siblings
If he left a will, there is no evidence of it—
The state and probate move slowly
My love hated to travel—
resisted all moves to new places
But this last place he will move
a gravesite in a small cemetery
where his parents are buried is his final travel
(unless one believes in a literal heaven or hell)
and, as usual, my love, or at least his body
resists any new move

Getting to Sleep

My mother used to get to sleep
by counting first, second, and third cousins
(this never worked for me since
I only have two first cousins and
very few second ones)
My Aunt Rose, my role model, used to
get to sleep by counting the men she's known
And I used to also do this once
I was in my forties
But now much older, I find I
am getting to sleep by
counting the men I have known—who have died
To be accurate, I should say boyfriends
since I had a boyfriend starting at the age of two—
Some have just disappeared from my life
While it's true at my age, some could
conceivably be dead
I usually just count the ones I know are dead

Roddy, my kindergarten boyfriend,
though he was so smart, they
skipped him ahead a year after that—
He invited me years later to visit him
at his boarding school Lawrenceville
where I fell in love with his roommate
though we just talked

And Donny, my boyfriend,
who lived on the second floor of my
two family house on McClellan Street
I remember we played doctor and
how upset my mother was when she
caught us and how embarrassed I was
even though I was only about four

And years later, Michael, my love of 23
years, gone from complications of
prostate and emphysema
and always with a cigarette in his hand

And before him, Gregory,
who I loved and hated
still alive through his poems
in college classes where
the Beats are studied—
Gregory, who promised me he'd
come and give me something to take
if I were slowly dying
though I never was certain how to
take that remark—gone, gone, gone

And the long list of men from my past
who passed on—
I hate that phrase—
But by that I mean those
who are gone from our planet
from my past but also those
in my past who disappeared
probably not just the ones
permanently buried, cremated,
frozen or their ashes just adding to the pollution
we breathe in—but those who might still
be alive but passed by me—some running—
some crying when things didn't work out
And in a sense that last list of men is long enough
to count tonight to get me to sleep