

Poetry Series

Bonnie Shipman
- poems -

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Bonnie Shipman(1994)

I write because it is my gift. Sometimes I write my story in poem (e.g. how I am feeling, what is going on in my life) . Sometimes I write the words God gives me (those tend to be my best poems!) . Sometimes my words are the simple and natural outflow of creativity.

I have seven sisters and one brother, I love to travel (I have been overseas several times) and my favorite thing to do is become absorbed in a book.

Aging Young

Here I am, stretching the skin of my brain,
encompassing the fat of ready knowledge.
When I am old, the wrinkles of my mind
may frighten a younger generation.

Bonnie Shipman

Better?

Were things better
Today...
Was I better
Today
Than last week,
Than
I was yesterday?
Did I reach out better
Toward the moon's soft glow;
Did I dream a bit bigger
Do you think it showed?
Did my glossy hair
Catch the light
Reflected in the rain?
Was today a bit
Better...
Or was it just the same?

11/17/10

Bonnie Shipman

Bite My Tongue

I must Bite my tongue
to curb a bitter word.
I must Bite my tongue
when I curse with my tone,
if not my words.
To hold back pain,
I must Bite my tongue.
To show dislike for one I should love-
no, I must Bite my tongue.
When anger comes out like a whip,
I remember- I must Bite my tongue.
Self-control is not my strength.
God? Teach me how
to Bite my tongue.

Bonnie Shipman

Black & Brown - A Rejection Of The Abstract

Black as the tip of a monarch's wing,
Black as the raven and crow,
Blacker than sunflowers' centers, I know,
Black as coal against snow—
Black is the skin of African kings.

Brown is the cross where the Savior died:
Brown as earth which grows our food;
Browner still than a certain quiet mood;
Brown as log cabin, rude—
Brown as a tree trunk, strong and wide.

Bonnie Shipman

Boys

boys
the first time i've written about them
they make me laugh
sometimes i make them laugh instead
and i like that
their eyes
are beautiful, but not like girls' eyes,
cause girls
look at you differently
they hug
but holding their hand can be more personal
than that hug
cute
sometimes quiet, even insecure, but most
won't show it
strong
and it's okay that they like cars, and games, and
other things i don't
it can be fun to hear them talk
even if i can't join in
i like
to make them answer questions, and sometimes
they even ask one back
boys are loud when they are happy
but then they smile a quiet smile
just before they leave, and i remember—
to think
about how they feel other things, too, and so i like
boys

6/4/2011

Bonnie Shipman

Child Of The Winter

The wind is calling me
The rain cries out my name
I am a child of the winter:
The shivering of leaves;
dancing of the grass;
the sparkle of the droplets
gathered on cold branches—
These are my home.
The wind is calling me
to come and dance again
on the sleeping ground.
Can you hear the promise?
Soon the rain will bring new life.
Warmth will fill the wind
and I will steal away to a new home

Bonnie Shipman

Coffee And God

I search to be satisfied in every coffee cup
the stains on their insides only mirror mine
I hate every taste of a world gone bad,
but I just keep sniffing, insatiably longing
For something—I don't know what
For someone—why has He not shown up?
The thought of coffee burns my mind
but I still long to fill the empty mugs.
Where is the friendship a hot drink embodies,
Where's the companion who will sit by my side?
Finally I realize—not the cups, not my mouth,
but the very middle of me needs filled
I search to be found in the eyes of everyone
seeing only coffee stains before they avert their eyes
You find me before I realize I'm lost
And you wipe away the staining tears on my soul
And your presence is the scent of growing leaves—
A whole new world is waiting, outside the door.

3/19/11

Bonnie Shipman

Comparing

I have long brown hair;
hers is long and blonde and smoother than mine
I write poems or stories or songs;
she writes too, but her poems are more poetic
I get angry and sarcastic;
She holds her tongue.
I love my sisters and brother silently;
She smiles and encourages them...
But in the end, I don't see that you are better,
I only see that you are beautiful, my sister.
Perhaps you see the same about me.

Bonnie Shipman

Contrast In My Dance

If danger didn't hide so well
in the shadowed, lazy days
If loneliness could lose
its thin-ground edge
If life was truly warm as
sunlight in those autumn trees...
I'd find myself a strong and laughing
partner and we'd dance carelessly
But shakings nest precariously
in these plastered walls of hearts
And somberly, unafraid but solemnly
I dance with scarred hands held in mine

Bonnie Shipman

Crossword

A maze of black and white emptiness
Fills me with a sense of craziness.
Empty spaces are waiting to be filled-
With words finely ground and milled.
Do I speak first, or should you?
We already filled silences with shoes
Thrown, with cross words scratched down-
One: stupid, Two: liar, Three: clown.
Crosswords are only paper- rip ours up
Put your new words, kind ones, in my cup;
We'll share a cup of tea in kindness.
Cross words fade... they aren't timeless.

Bonnie Shipman

Cry

Waves
of challenge
demand I grow up
but don't tell me how.

Tears
as bitter as any I've cried
mirror the retraction
of my soul.

Questions,
unanswerable,
go to waste in my spinning
internal vastness.

How do I know
what to do?

Bonnie Shipman

Did Something Right

It went as well as expected.

Maybe because I meant it when I prayed
Or I listened to God a little during the day
And held my tongue even when I seethed
Thought it didn't matter about little things
Tried not to argue or stir up a fight—
Maybe I finally did something right...

1/19/11

Bonnie Shipman

Empathy

I catch you crying
in the closet,
and wonder
what has gone wrong.

Is your heart broken
by a cruel bully?
or mis-shapen
after a stray arc of loneliness hit you?
did I hurt you somehow,
and not realize?
where are your friends
anyway?
you have some
you know.
didn't you know?
I would be your friend
if you wanted...

You see me open the door
and shake your head.
so I step into your darkness
close it again
cry with you.

Bonnie Shipman

Five

One, two, three, four, five
I count my fingers again
Are they all still there?

Bonnie Shipman

Fly Away

You've never dreamed of taking off to soar above the homes
You've never cozied up inside the thought of resting on the branches of a tree

To tremble when he trembles in the wind and trust his strength
To wake with the morning and sing to the skies, winging your flight beyond
You've always seen the blue heavens as more than what they seem
You've always held your mind back from dreaming bigger dreams of freedom

To share your soul with the windy wisps of cloud and shadows
To find the joy of birdsong you've held in for so long—just fly... fly away, bird

Bonnie Shipman

Fulfilled

Rusty old chicken wire
Once enclosing hens and chicks
Silent and useless
To another place
We carry you away now
Sleep and remember

Bonnie Shipman

Gladness

There are a thousand smiles
on my face tonight
There are a thousand wings
taking off in flight
There are a thousand winds
coming from the sky
There are a thousand reasons
why...

2/4/12

Bonnie Shipman

Growing

Never thought about my weight before
Never needed to
Momma says it's not just that
She says it's my blood sugars
She says it's my hormones
She says I have a bad attitude
I guess that's true- all of it
My blood sugars have been pretty high
I couldn't guess about hormones
My attitude...
I haven't kept track

Mom says I have to listen to my body
She says, "Start paying attention."
I know she is pretty smart
Moms usually are

Bonnie Shipman

Heart Ice

ice, like hope, melts sometimes
ice, like fear, hides so much under the surface
ice, like belief, can crack the rocks and still be beautiful

12/16/2012

Bonnie Shipman

Hope Against Weakness

My hope responds within me
To the promise in your life
You lived as weak and weary
Yet victorious over strife
My life is weak and weary
My life victorious, too?
This desire for your glory
Maybe I could be like you.

Bonnie Shipman

I Know How To Fix This

A choice; I know that is what I need to make;
That's how my attitude changed the first time,
during my Siberia trip,
and afterwards when Momma knew
that something had changed inside of me
A choice to live in perpetual love,
to let go if someone angers me;
if they start a fight, or if I do;
When another person, human like myself,
falls short of my expectations, then, just maybe,
it is my expectations that are wrong,
not their small actions and bitter frowns;
I forget; my log is bigger than ever
yet I still blow the speck from your eye.
Please, God, I can't get it right;
please change my heart.

Bonnie Shipman

I See Shadows

I thought I made mistakes
And found I had
My shadow fell into my eyes
Until the rain washed me away

Under the city
Where the gypsies roam, I discovered
People who make mistakes
Don't always cry

And I cried
Until I washed myself away

The cold damp darkness piercing
Could not find me until my eyes
Opened on the golden tear
Falling from the eye of a father
Bending over me

"You thought mistakes
Were the end, " he said
And I had

Then his laughter rose
From under my—suddenly scarred—back
Washed me
For the first time, inside
Until I spewed up my shadow
And laughed with him

10/25/11

Bonnie Shipman

Innocence And Riches

Encrusted with jewels
And covered with gold
It may be priceless
But it can be sold

Plain as a handful
Of unsifted dirt
It may be worthless,
But losing it hurts

Maybe it's backwards
Maybe it's wrong
But a treasure untreasured
Won't last for long

Bonnie Shipman

'Is Tranquility...? '

Is tranquility a brick wall?
Its patient dust compressed
into a still red stone?
Sharp edges muffled in mortar
Silently absorbing the sun
when the rain, half-repelled, half-
grasped on a misty afternoon,
has ceased to darken our rough bricks?
The sounds of passing children
likewise soak in, falling into solid
contentment in the heart
of our red and reaching wall

Bonnie Shipman

Joyfilling

Worship
is my favorite
we come together
raise our hands
sometimes, close our eyes
sing like everything
You can feel
Daddy's nearness
in your soul
like a laugh in your middle
like a smile filling your face
like a shiver of delight
and on the slow songs
we bow our heads
feel the Shekinah
stand straight, tall
Then they come!
The fast praises swell
Burst the bellies
ring from the instruments, and
We dance!
Like a welcome party, but more glad

Rahab takes my hand,
Esther lifts her feet
Mary spins like a chariot wheel
Worship
is never over
but the songs begin to come from eyes
as heaven's members return to work
and mine come out of my feet
like tickles
until I laugh and run to the meadow

Bonnie Shipman

Learn My Pain

Don't call it "disease-"
despite its medical name.
It's so new for her.
I wish she needn't know this-
the ins and outs of weakness

Bonnie Shipman

Looney Limericks

Herbert was as old as could be
He lived 'til a hunnert and three
Then he closed his eyes
and refused to rise
'cause earth was as dumb as TV!

Molly eats flies every day
She doesn't know why; couldn't say!
And when she is full
She feels that her soul
Has desperate reasons to pray

There once was a purple canoe
That was shaped just like a big shoe
It floated away
To bright Paraguay -
The townspeople painted it blue

Bonnie Shipman

Love

They shall know us by our love, exhibited to neighbors all around
They shall know that we are loved, by peace within our faces at the sound
Of persecution raging or lying tongues towards numbers of our sum,
Like in barbarian times while lions ate the faithful ones of Rome.
Of grace with endless trials, for the power of God we've found;
Of singing as we're dying; of living with no love of earth as home:
They shall know us. For our love proclaims the news that God has come!

Bonnie Shipman

Marriage-Math Musings

Marriage.

That's all there is to say, really!
It sums up the middle of the night
tears
the morning dread of leaving bed
because that would mean
not cuddling into the hollow
of your warm back.

Multiplied

by the warm lunchtime hugs
and kisses and food—all those things
I take, before spilling my beans

You gather up my words
and let them simmer with honey
until afternoon gives us chances to taste them
and evening fills our spoon with new thoughts
we can't help wanting to share

Marriage.

Divided by the frowns I apologize for
with new outfits
that only you will ever see;
and that expectation I have that you will be like me
(persuaded to change
when I see how wonderful you already are)

It shows the difference between
loneliness and companionship
talking to myself and reading you off
my deepest ideas
because I know you'll listen
between privacy and intimacy... some things
just aren't my own any more
but then, some things aren't just YOURS.

Yeah, what is there to say, beyond this ocean
I've swallowed and the

sea flowing from my mouth?

Marriage.

What is there to say?

"A name is the fullness what a thing is, " a wise man
told me

Well, the result of this function

is love, in case

you couldn't decipher that with your calculator

And

My, my, my. What a thing it certainly is:

Marriage.

Bonnie Shipman

Master, Me

those failed moments when i spoke out of turn
tell me, daddy, they didn't

master me
that urge to spend myself on temporary pleasures
tell me, dearest, it didn't

master me
the rising frustrations which burst to burn my family
tell me, friend God, they didn't

master me
that sorrow of despair, defeat, questioning recovery
hold me, Father, and fully

master me

Bonnie Shipman

Miracles Are Everywhere

Miracles are everywhere.

They seem small to us sometimes, but a miracle is a miracle, which means amazing...

And bigger than we think

A tiny braid in the baby's hair,
A ring of solid gold,
A silvery shell from the sandy shore,
A hand for me to hold,
A skinny tree, unplanted,
A hole in dirty soil,
A perfect match,
A chattering family,
A pair of matching ears,
A time for silence,
The depth of space and stars like twenty golden moons,
The fingernail-sized forget-me-not in bloom,

These are miracles that I know.

A new and sparkling dollar-coin,
And eyelashes closed in flight to a dream,
And Mama's knee for the daughter's head,
And prayers sent out with simple faith,
And the promise of their return,
A single freckle on a creamy cheek,
A Hindu preaching Jesus' truth,
A healed mute learning how to speak,
A baby bird in a robin's nest,

A shy smile and dimples,
A cacophony of shadows: trees on water, hawk on me, earth on moon, cloud on mountain-shadows.
A harp in tune,
A perfect jewel,
Me-
carried like a baby, looking pretty or laughing

Moments

little things
moments of my time
if a day could be broken
into so many fragments
each one would be a snapshot
like a perfect polaroid
or an old time periscope scene
and they would be notes on a scale
sometimes two at a time
and I could analyze these moments
if my eyes
had the time

Bonnie Shipman

Moments In Time: Haiku

Mysterious gray
The shadow of a lone tree
Silently waiting

=

Spring is cold sunlight
Becoming warm once again
And touching the trees

=

spiked bird beak peppers
holes in a tree; little bugs
burrow deeper in

=

on a small flower
dancing gently in the wind
a black bumblebee

Bonnie Shipman

My French Horn And I

Cold at first, the smooth metal,
The round bell my fingertips caress.
Reflected golden light
And the honey-thickness of color
In my horn- how beautiful!
A smooth sound, sliding up and down,
Calling out souls to sway in time,
Fingers slow dance on three valves
The circle of metal against my mouth,
We make music together.
... the round hum rushing past my fingers
To explore the world's wideness.
Filled now, no longer cold or lonely,
My horn, you are filled with sound:
The crooning call,
The waking blast,
That one high, clear prayer of a note.
I blow; your pipes are roads for the air-
We make music together.
A lingering note touches the wind.
The light is caught in your gleaming brass
As I lay you down,
Warm from a song well-played.

Bonnie Shipman

My Spring Song

I slip
Away
Like wind
When summer
Is just around the corner
Baby
Robins
Chirping
As I whisper
Past the nest into woods
Find me
Sleeping
In wide fields
Where wind dances around fawns
Happy
In spring
Waiting
To awake
'Til the slanting sun calls out
My name

Bonnie Shipman

My Thinks

I think no one cares
What I think (upstairs
In this lonely mind of mine)
Where my thoughts stand in line
For a moment of my time)
I think no one listens
To my ideas as they glisten
Like a bunch of perfect eyes
Which are smiling as they try
To believe a child's lie
I think not one could wish
They knew the dreams I swish
Around and up and down
In my crazy self's brain-town
Where the color is never brown-
I think to my fill,
I think this, until...
You throw me pennies
I throw you thoughts
You're pennies become replies
As my shyly said words rise
Like with pennies you have bought
My humble honor and delight
That you want to know the plight
And all the shining light
That my brain can bring to sight.
And I think someone cares,
and I'm right

Bonnie Shipman

Nobody Loved Her

Nobody loved her
And she loved nobody back
Nobody took her by the hand
And led her to the mountain top
Nobody said, "Jump,
And I will catch you."
So she jumped,
And nobody did.
Somebody should have loved her
Somebody should have cared
Maybe if somebody had reached out,
nobody would have been lost
And she would still be here

Somebody loved her
And she loved everybody back
Somebody took her by the hand
And led her to the mountaintop
Somebody said, "Fall,
And I will catch you."
And when she fell,
Somebody did.

Bonnie Shipman

One Copper

I've only got a penny,
One shiny copper penny.
But I have lots of plans.
I could make a stage
For fleas to dance upon;
I could buy a yellow candy
From my friend who's only nine;
I can bet for heads or tails,
Then cheer me when I win;
I could tape it to a card
For my Grandma in the Home;
I could put it in a bucket,
In a Good Salvation bucket,
For the guys not doing fine;
I could race it 'gainst a nickel,
I could rub it when I'm sad,
Or round and round and round it,
Trace a sunshine shape, a ball.
But of all my lovely options,
The one I pick as best
Is to ask you for a thought—
One penny's worth of thought—
Which one do YOU like most?

Bonnie Shipman

'Pride Is Cruel'

pride is cruel
through me
but it doesn't
have to be

I have Jesus

how much
will I give up
to keep him
in control?

Bonnie Shipman

Rainy

Dripping, puddling,
Constant winter weather
I love Oregon's cold raindrops!
Water

Bonnie Shipman

Reflection

In a silent day
a silent heart
in an angry day
a bitten tongue
in far away mirrors,
reflected in sand,
the shifting times,
the aging hands.

6/11/2010

Bonnie Shipman

Remembering The Crash

A sudden moment
Shattered glass falls as I gasp
Then stillness returns

Bonnie Shipman

Satisfied

do those late nights,
 watching false loves stories
 complete their cliched kisses, round me out?
do those stories read again,
 desperately,
 really separate me from this never complacent world?
do these demands fade in my avoidance,
 as if it were ignorance,
 with further attempts to solace my soul?

Satisfaction is a lie if I give to myself.

In the worship songs I find you again
 after all those marshmallows have melted
 leaving me dissatisfied

Bonnie Shipman

Sell My Soul

The vicarious wanderer
carries my soul to find
the man with tin trinkets
Perhaps he will buy my soul
and re-sell it for a bargain

Bonnie Shipman

Should I Write A Rhyming Poem

Should I write a rhyming poem?
Or perhaps a prose-like one
With lots of decoracious phrases, dear?
It could be very fun to have a lovely one
Whose syllables all match,
Oh! That would be a catch
Unless you would prefer it to be shining
With adjectives, like cream upon a cake
Or scum atop a lake, to fatten up
My poem and make it smile
I'll use the words, "Quite silent, "
And, "How terra-bibbly violent! "
So I hope you have such
Fluffy fun and games
And with me as your hostess
We will all do toast-es
To the happy and glumpy, horribly lumpy, squishy and jumbled and mismatched
and wonderful poem

Bonnie Shipman

Silk

Sliding softly past the painful scars—
the shimmering covering she shakes out,
formerly folded on the shelf far above
Wear it, love.

Woefully whispered into the veil, white—
some secrets sister had stored out
of sight, like that silken scarf freshly found
and unbound.

Bonnie Shipman

Surreal Truth

Right past the mildewed art on the wall,
My heartbeats stain the downbeat of a mellow song
While the crickets catch laryngitis in this cold concrete fortress
And that dream you were telling me plays over and over
on the screen at the end of the hall

12/15/2012

Bonnie Shipman

Surroundings

Nature is a place
and not a person
Nature is the world
of the creation

Where life happens
without any help at all
Where rain and leaves
mean summer's gone; it's fall

The touch of wind,
taste of summer air
Sound of waterfalls
Sights and smells to share

Nature is a presence
around the patient one
Who waits to discover
Nature's secrets come undone

Bonnie Shipman

Swing Beat

Sassy spins
Sudden dips
Touch the ground
Red, red lips

Twist in time
Step so near
Silent dance
Fills my ear

What his smile
Passes on
Like a jewel
In her dawn

May the music
Of the heart
Teach each one
To dance their part

Bonnie Shipman

Temptation

What's on your mind?
Temptation asks.
Books: read them,
Movies: watch them;
Satisfy yourself, he
slyly insinuates.

Little does he know
I cannot.

What troubles you?
The question accosts me.
The future: fear it,
Hating me: hate others instead;
Protect yourself- walls,
he insists, are for comfort.

Liar, little does he know
I cannot protect myself
except, perhaps, from myself.

Lord, give me strength.

Bonnie Shipman

To My Brother...

Bring me Home in the morning
When I can't go further.
Bring my mother with her learnings,
My dad from the field,
Sister, who has healed.

Bring me Home as I'm dying;
I will bid you goodbye
Bring me Home, without cold sighing.
Your forgiveness, first,
Grant to my soul's thirst.

Bring me Home, though I'll never
Deserve the care you give.
Bring my sins so you can sever
Them from your heart's tome-
Brother, bring me Home.

Bonnie Shipman

Tribute

unexpected teacher,
you taught me a lesson
about myself
—don't underestimate your smile.
you made me learn
what it means to be friends—
grow nearer.

then, you let me know
what waves the soul can brave—
you showed me so well
that words
aren't always spoken
—vows can be broken
without a trace of written truce

knowing you
has taught me to know others
including myself

Bonnie Shipman

Truest

The truth
is not always
sweetest
sometimes
it is only
truest

Bonnie Shipman

Un-Love

unlove

i can't fight it on my own

trying

i failed every time i thought i'd won

person

what makes me cringe at your name

unlove

i know it is not your way, God

please

renew my mind, change my heart

somehow

give me your eyes of love

3/30/10

Bonnie Shipman

Victory Waves

Today I live.
Yesterday I lived.
The day before that,
I almost didn't.
Jesus? ! ! ! ! ! ?

How can you,
who have never almost died,
understand that question?
Now I understand
hopelessness.
Overwhelmed
by waves.
Save me! ! ! ! !

I can still taste
the desperation
in that cry,
and the bitter taste of seawater.

But as I look back,
I don't see the gasping,
when violent waters
closed over my lungs.
I don't feel the fear
that even if I made it,
my mother,
my sister,
my uncle,
his sister,
might not.

I taste the moment
when I stepped forward
and the waves didn't force me back once more.
I taste the moment when I believed I would live.

I had told the sea,
as he rendered me powerless,

"Ocean, you can't have us! ! "

And by God's grace
I stepped out on sands
unshifting,
and looked back
and saw my family take hold of one another
and walk forward.

I live.
Tomorrow I will live.
God holds me in His hands.

2/11/2010

Bonnie Shipman

Wind

Wild storms

Laughter amid thorns

Touching my face

Touching a deep place

Wind

Bonnie Shipman

Wrong One

There he came
 confident as a prince,
for in fact, he was a prince
and he was a nice boy
 I guess,
if you like the sort
 who like you because
you're a princess
and he brought
 red roses
which cost him nothing
and I don't like red roses
 but he never asked me
what it was
 I do like
 because he's not
the one for me.

Bonnie Shipman