

Poetry Series

Sarita Brown
- poems -

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Sarita Brown(11/03/1956)

Sarita Brown was born to teenage parents in the 50's. Her maternal grandparents were from Oklahoma and migrated to California during the depression.

She grew up in a small beach community in Southern California during the 60's and 70's, an idyllic experience she laughingly refers to as a cross between the Wonder Years and That 70's Show. Her mother ran a small cafe on the end of the pier and she grew up on the beach.

She was the first woman in her family to graduate from high school, the first to graduate from college and the first to have her first child out of her teens.

She says that her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother are her heroes for their tireless devotion to the goodness of life and their faith.

Sarita started writing about the same time she started singing. The cadence of song, even in her free verse work mark her poetry.

She has lived in California, Oregon, Texas, London, Geneva, Scotland and has recently made her home in Arequipa Peru, where she studies Spanish, works with kids and writes obsessively.

She has a degree in theology of religion and has worked with people with learning disabilities in the arts. She paints when she runs out of words.

She was married for 22 years to the writer, ey, and has a son, Lucas, a counselor for troubled teens who lives in Texas and a daughter, Zoe, a micro-biologist who lives in San Diego. They do her proud.

After The Phone Call

after all the time she spent on it,
you would have thought
she could recognise a dead baby
when she saw one.

but she just kept blowing air into his lungs, like he
wanted to breathe or
even cared to be alive.
she propped him in a chair.
she fed him food he never tasted.
she gave him kisses he never felt.

in the end, he resented her insistence on
living or love or passion.
he spit his dead baby spit in her eye and
told her to
go to hell.

sometimes you have to let dead things lie.
let them be dead.
give them a proper burial
quit pretending that there was
anything there but an empty house
with no one home.
quit wasting your love on a dead thing.

Sarita Brown

Chance And Geometry

Chance and Geometry

There is a sense that all
the magic has fled us.
Weber says that intellectualisation and
rationality mean
that there are no mysterious,
incalculable forces
that come into play,
but rather that one can- in principle-
'master all things by calculation.'

How could we think that we prefer
our own puny calculations
(So devoid of real data,
So luminously ignorant)
to that lash of random, beautiful Chance,
the sting of incalculable, mysterious forces
that care so little about our outcomes
except to spice up the narrative?

I 'm sure i want more meaning than
an equation of
pros and cons, good and evil
the right man at the wrong time
the wrong man at the right time,
but
all my silly femininities and lost causes
blast away at the foundations
of my careful construction.

Yes, I thought I'd
mastered all things by calculation,
added and subtracted
my failures and successes,
weighed up the possible outcomes,
come up with a sum
I could live with...
Tidy sums.

issoles triangles

$E=mc^2$.

This morning finds me once again
on my knees in the floor laughing or crying
for want of the mysterious
that once guided my life so
deftly.

God or

Love or

Destiny. I'll admit it,

I'm addicted to Chance.

'Fuk it' I pray.

Fervently.

Unwilling to let the decisions
make themselves or
throw up my hands in the face of the undeniable
truth

that

you don't love me

anymore.

Let the devil have his 10 minutes of fame

where the consequences of my loving you

fall fully across my back.

'40 lashes save one'

isn't' that the sentence that Jesus took on back
when reason feared the incalculable mysterious?

Whipped like a puppy because

He loved us too much to accept our decisive

'piss off, Jesus, you're doing my head in'

(We say, "I mean, He's a lot of fun at parties, but He's so intense'

We say, ' It's the way He finds a meaning in every little lie we tell '

We say, 'Hey, lighten up, God, would you? ')

And when He persistently, insistently
continues to love us,
mercilessly generous
and not caring that we are complete shits;

we kill Him.

He takes about three days to decide
He's not having it,
uses our brutality to secure
us an eternal life we
never asked for.
Now we owe Him
exactly
what we previously refused
to give Him freely.
So much for calculation.

This morning in my room
I was empty after weeping,
fine as an eggshell, you
could have crushed me with a smile;
remembering how God
warned me that my life was about
to come undone,
asked me if I still wanted an answer to my last
prayer.
(‘heal me or kill me’, i’d prayed back then.
Meaning every word of it)
Boarding that trans-atlantic flight was
my ‘Yes’ to Him.

I bared my heart, allowed it to be
sliced wide open with His sabre of Chance,
He watched as the Mysterious ran me down with
this freight train of desire.
for you.
slapped me with this holy stupid Love.
Allowed me my useless hope
founded on misinterpreted prophecies,
left me here where the only deliverer
possible
is the One who let me fall.

Left wondering if He will deliver me
after all
God knows, you aren't going to.

Well. Fair enough.
I asked for it.
You know as well as I what everything
its cost me,
just as I know how it cost you exactly
what you'd budgeted.

Now comes the healing part:
take this love back, God
-which has neither killed nor healed me,
shown me the light nor given me eternal life -
take it back
along with Chance and Mystery.
Use them for something bigger
if You can.
Because right at this moment
-if You don't mind-
I'm reconsidering the beauty of
Geometry.

Sarita Brown

Conversation By A Dusty Highway

God sits next to me on the busy highway
and says nothing.

we have been traveling for months now and he is getting
edgey.

i told him that the last turn was doubtful, but you know
god, he never listens to anyone.

that is not fair.
he listens to me.

I tell him that the broken heart is not
a tree or a brick, but a wheel
and is too bent for its normal use
i can put it on a wall,
use it for decoration, try to plant something
in it that will grow.

He says, nice try, but that's not what
hearts are for, mere display.
they are not pictures or vases or easels
or sculpture
they are alive and they want more.

he assures me that there is a healing mechanism that will
turn this last break, this toughest one so far
into a fiber so strong
it won't break that same way again.

but that means, i murmur,
that it won't love that way again either.

he turns away from me to watch
the double deckered trucks flying down the road.

'love is the combination of all the people
you have ever loved and every person that
has ever loved anyone or anything
and each person

and each love
and each strand is a fiber of Love
and the strands break and new strands come.
its painful and real.
its hard and lovely.

its not damage, its organic and it will
it will
it will
be ok.

How do you know, i ask him
how can i be sure?

he looks at me with the laser
light of all his truth
and i cringe a bit. he needs to learn
to tone that thing down.

It's what i do.'

we are silent.

have You ever loved and lost?
I ask.

the gravel spits up at us from the
roadside and makes divots in his cheek

'Every day'.
he says.

Sarita Brown

Happy Birthday

There was a light
there above and around
your fine head
which buzzed
with JD and laughter.
And after all my darkness
I really needed Light,
(though you always claimed:
'optical illusion') .

So Dark and Light
swirled between us
and made a Rainbow Child
who shines and storms
in alternate intensity.
Our little magic trick.
Our grace.

Today at the crack of dawn
while reading
a travel guide to Peru
and nursing a body
groaning at the endless
delighted foolishness that
is my life,
I celebrated your Light,

which is no illusion
but an endless beacon
of love and kindness and mirth
to anyone lucky enough
to be ever
graced in its presence.

closing my eyes, i will into you
'joy'
I will into you
'peace and rest'
I wish.I pray.

'soak up all the love you deserve
mister'.

Love, my love.

25 years ago, in a sleazy bar in
Mission Beach, god
lit up my world with you.
i still walk in that light,
like i deserved it or something.

we both know the truth about
that.

Sarita Brown

Our First Date

We met when I was 12,
you might say I was a child bride.

he was not very attractive when he was around his
family,
something about their white collar ways,
their preoccupation with money matters'
and pew styles
seemed to stifle him.
And even though they kept saying his
name, somehow I got the impression
that they didn't much care for his
penchant for unpredictability.
they liked a deity they could tame.

i used to see him glancing at me
as i yawned through yet another AGM,
waiting for the coffee and donuts.

one day i was outside
listening for thunder,
seeing how the great green grey clouds had congregated
around my head,
i was silently wishing for heavenly voices,
as i was wont to do
when he came walking toward me.
all i could think of was the way
his eyes never left mine for
one moment and how easy it was to look back
at him.

I think we are supposed to travel together
he said.

oh, says i,
i didn't know i was going any
where.

oh, he smiled,

you are.

his truth buttered down my thighs
and made me gasp.
(he never did learn to tone that down.)

'Come on', he says,
'my bike is parked
right outside.'

Sarita Brown

Scenes From The Parallel Universe In My Sleep

pop pop pop
go the guns in the street and we are alone
in a naked room on a dark
alleyway
and i am silent.

he brushes the blood from my face.
its not mine.

there are people screaming everywhere and what
you cant describe is the total helplessness at knowing
you will not get to them in time.

this was planned for but unexpected.

while he rubs my back frozen with fear,
i think;
we are scapegoating the world and we are scared to live
because we are afraid to die and you have to choose which one will
be your master in the end. which dog will you feed and which dog will you
kill and why and why
and?

he blows a soft breath on my neck where he
has laid his head. not from weariness but sorrow.

he loves every speck of our dust.

how, in the face of all this destruction,
he manages that, i just don't know.

which is -thankfully -why he has the job
and not me, i guess.

'what makes you say that? '
he murmurs in my ear, almost asleep.

'we rode into town on the same bike,
remember? '

Sarita Brown

Seven Columns Of Truth

is there a way to find our way
and make a way in the darkness
is there a way to redefine the darkness
to know the dark-ness
is only a version of the light
of the way we are and the way we are
is unimagin-ably wonder-ous
the simple complexi-ty of humanity
is the one thing that keeps us all together
in one place at one time in one way or the other.

we do not have a book that tells us
we do not have a handle on our pain
we do not have the secret deep within us
and we do not have a way to talk
about it even when we most need to,
somehow the way home was become
the way we refuse and the way we refuse
must be the way our secret longings
and the longings are ingrained in us
and made to fit our souls.

if i tell you a secret it is not a secret any longer
and we do not know how to treasure our secrets
the ones we keep between ourselves and god alone.
He must feel so betrayed
to never have a single secret with one of us
that we do not have
published by that
Random house place to make profit...

i ask him sometimes when we are napping together
if i have hurt him somehow
'oh darling, ' he murmurs,
'you know that it can't hurt any deeper than the way I've hurt you
myself.'

i accept that as an apology..in his way.
We go back so far that to hold it against him would be

inconsistent with the forgiveness i know is there.
now we don't talk about it much,
but i think that he is a little disappointed in my lack of
commitment.

i think he has given up on the big plan we talked
about when i was younger. he knows I am tired
and knows that there is only one thing i really want these days.
no great purpose, message or meaning to life.
I just want a real person to fall into, LOVE,
just want to remember how to kiss in the elevator.
to make love until all our bones melt with the sheer
heat of this lovely physicality, this flesh
I wanted more once. but i'm tired.
And i've been alone so long
I almost forgot that other humans are real.

So he sends them sometimes, like you.
and here we are, not so simple after all the wanting.
But I'm learning to live with it, just for the exchange.

I take you as my one and true love she said onstage,
knowing that the chances are just as good
that you will leave me one day soon and
have that wedding you think you'll hate
and the babies you claim
you don't want to just to make me feel better.
It only matters that i love you.
just as god does love you and me
and waits for the real to come shining through on us both
on us all on the whole dam planet.
he knows we will be melded with, swallowed up in, Joy.
'take that' he'll say laughing.
take now out of time what you refused to take IN Time.
take me, i am Love and i will Love and you will Love
when you remember that you are in me too.

this is the gospel according the Way
Of Love.
and it has many names and faces.

one of them is yours.

Sarita Brown

Soul's Cathedral

I keep wondering about
perfection
when we think we see it
how it scares us
I am inhabited by hope
a hope that swims and sometimes floats
a hope that rides the life-crested wave
and believes in the underwater toe-holds

so fragile
that hope

I am swimming
swimming
I am breaking waves as
we round the corner and
exchange the first
glance of recognition,
which- as we know can
betray.

On the other side of this shore, someday
i want to construct
some marvelous architecture of
relationship
one thats delicately engineered
to avoid the pitfalls i know
are inherent in any
large undertaking

like:
don't dig any basements
put locks on the bathroom doors
who needs to know about all that shit
anyway?
waste matter.
irrelavant to living.
we dont need to watch.

i want to be surprised and to
surprise
when you see my vaulted ceiling
made of green glass, copper,
when i see the marble and leather floors
you laid in the dark.
presentation is everything.
visit the spaces of others.
gasp in amazement.
spend the night.
or two.
wake up to sunrise
through the picture window.
be grateful.

don't live there.

Sarita Brown

The Wind Is Blowing A Hole In My Heart

The wind is blowing a hole

in my heart

Its saying don't be an idiot.

Its saying don't be fragile in a strong time

Its saying the still small voice of god is nothing

To scoff at, its saying

There is nothing to be afraid of

But winds are like coins tossed in fountains..

Lucky ones are only lucky for the lucky

All the rest of us have to wait.

What exactly I am waiting for is beyond me really..

Some sign from heaven

Some word written on stone

Some parting of red water that will

Tell me I am on my way home.

If home is where the heart is,

Mine is a wanderer. My heart which has

Seen everything it sought beautiful and even pain is

Settled into a rhythm of rhyme and reason

rhythm and blues. Bluest but best times

Snaking in and out of the fast-laned highway

Of memory.

I have no regrets of anything I've ever done

Only what I neglected to do, being too cowardly

or too stonehearted.

I want a softer courage now, one that doesn't

Need to bend the world to my making

But will let it flow around my currents like

A river tide. If acceptance was never anything I courted,

suddenly its zen appeals.

And I will wait for luck to decide that intention

Is everything.

And because I have confidence
in my intention

I will be lucky

Sarita Brown

There Is Nothing Fluffy About This Story, Baby

but what he knew that no one knew was the wailing
the wailing in my heart where someone
had put out a cigarette and spit.

he saw it all.

if you wonder why he didn't stop it, well,
me too.

but there were lots of people who were supposed to stop
it, people that he left in charge and they couldn't
and they wouldn't and i wanted nothing more than for it to stop
and it never did.

not even years after it was over.

like so many.
he was there for those too.
and inside his blazing heart there is a scar
that runs the length and depth of it.

Now he shows me how to pass my hand over
all the blood and burned bits to turn it gold and amber
to rinse the wound with some acidic forgiveness

I add a bottle of jack daniels on the bad days.
on the good days i tell the stories of the others
who are still bleeding, who are waiting for someone
to stop it.
i join hands,
we are making progress.

Vicarious abuse,
is what the experts call it
when you are forced to watch someone else's
bad scene.

he has a hummer full of tapes and i tell
you the truth,

(i saw it with my own eyes)
he is there in
each grisly frame crying, hurting.

when they cut me,
he bled out.
but still?
He came for me later.

that is why i am on this bike.
he has taken the road before and
he knows dirt.
he wants to show me the real world
from the ground up.
correct some misconceptions about
his story which is not ready for publication
yet

(we write together in the dark, over and over
the words which cannot be contained
on tablets of stone, we whisper the one
two three of us
the way there is no going back now
the twigs digging into our backs in the dark.) .

Did you know?
he writes on my heart
with laserbeams
and tears
it might be painful, but it is beautiful
and has colors that make you weep.
unlike the story his family made up in his absence,
its a version i can
live with.)

Sarita Brown

What I Thought He Meant

His Family welcomes me with open arms.

for my initiation, i get a white robe, a new name
a pass to all potluck feasts and communal sing alongs
A red book with my name on it and
the guarantee of getting my name
actually into
into! !
the book of Life
(if i manage to keep my nose clean.)

I learn all the cheers. I can sing like an angel.
My mother is proud of my new associations and i
start to primly cross my legs inside the building which
i inhabit at least five times a week for all
posted activities.

There is no mention of my questionable background
or my penchant for asking the wrong
question at the wrong
time. seeing as i come with a
direct recommendation from the lord and liege himself
and
all.

all my little flaws, so prominent before now,
have been erased.
(or at least stored in the archives in case they
are needed later.)
Yes.
I have arrived.

One day, as i am leaving to walk home,
he is waiting outside,
leaning against the bike,
looking miserable.

oh, hi, i say.
sorry i haven't called,

but your folks have kept me
really really busy.

he glances up.

'you know', he says quietly,

flicking
his hair
out of his eyes,
running his hand down the warm motor casing,

'When i asked you to ride?
this wasn't exactly
what i had in mind'.

Sarita Brown