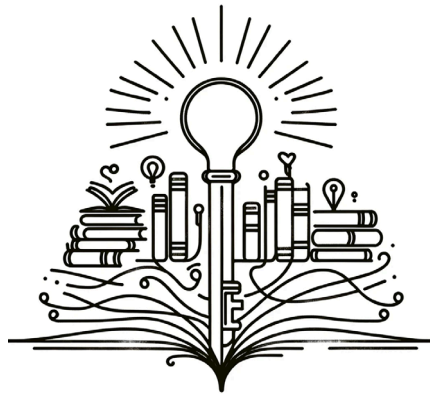


ELEPHANTS AND
GIRAFFES

LOVE POEMS FOR SHO

Lex E Santí



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A Key Therapy Publications

All of these are for Shona
And Gordie.
All of it is for them.
Shanti—Strong

ELEPHANTS AND GIRAFFES
BY LEX E SANTÍ, LCSW, MFA

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'ELEPHANTS AND GIRAFFES'

*(or) 'and the Kiwi shuffles past our feet, pecking in glee'
for Shona Craig*

Headline USA Today 12/19/12: Couple dances undisturbed by violent anti-American protests around them in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A picture barely makes out their faces, a reporter on the scene said she was a striking woman with green eyes and he had long hair and a full beard. The birds above pronounced them friends, or lovers or something in between.

I do not like this feeling.

I do not like it anymore.

There was a time I certainly did

 A glance from the dance floor would undo me.

 Shots from the bar and tilted looks, smiles exchanged

 By my senior year it was the breadth of a conversation that made me wince knowing my heart had been stolen

 Later a crisp debate with the knowing love for the world, a spark of a smile while accented laughter from the patio at a hostel

To find ourselves we shedding our clothes
naked on a black beach bathed in moonlight and embrace.

 To be struck craning my neck or trunk like an elephant or giraffe and smile at what walks into my life.

 All these times have been magical and this

 when a woman walks in to do a photo shoot

 and takes me by complete surprise

 who does all these things: beautiful brave and honest beauty, formidably intelligent and has an open

heart and she is shivering without a jacket outside on a spring day

 thinking about what she has left behind

 And all I wanted to do

 Is put my arms around you.

One believes they can outgrow the way a woman's smile
Can leave a man defenseless before her.

 I am here to say, you don't.

 I take photo by photo knowing

 She is a muse—and I want to be closer

 Like we were laying on the grass and I stared into your eyes

 And it was as if time stopped not for the sake of necessarily ending one world

 beginning something new between the two of us, of a new understanding of self

 Birds pass by overhead and wonder

 Are they lovers or friends or nothing more?

 And there were many times before that I wished to kiss these lips.

 The steady cadence of rain outside my door

 the cello moving steadily back and forth

 looped into a parade of gentle thoughts

 they bring me back

 to the center that I feel you have undone.

 A kiwi passes by our feet and smiles.

 I awoke this morning from a dream

 You and I were in bed together

 the room was large and orange and the light

 Our bodies warm and soft

 the long drapes were barely cracked.

 Delicate yellow and red morning light

And we held one another until the light grew too great
And I arose to watch the sunrise and when I turned you
were no longer in bed but
you stood before me
Naked, holding onto light
And walked towards me in, a gentle blush
Standing tall as a talisman
at the sunrise to something new and
for just a moment smiled before we held one another.

What does this mean that I feel safe
and understood
by someone who cannot possible understand me
fully there is something between us at
our core that feels at peace
as if around us our two souls we were set apart
I can listen to you explain your thoughts
On the world around you
as you tear apart and interpret the truth for hours
as we explore the meaning of elephants and giraffes
your light smile
a blush that tells me you feel something
your nervous laughter
your gentle stare and the magnetism and that
smile that knows
that seems to give me a sort of tunnel vision
between the two of us
I say plainly I get lost in your voice, I enjoy
hearing it too much
I wonder when the next time
I will hear it again
When will I get the chance again to feel
that again? To share a tea date. An intimate gesture.

a moment -- like this poem, intimately
sharing
I ask, is that what this is?
Are we to bring one another to something else?
to have one another in our lives
to bring one another to another chapter
as if there is no one left in the room
but us
while we watch
the world evolve around us
I have to believe that this is what it means when
kindred spirits find one another
Hands held
circling first damn
find a private beautiful place to swim
laugh as children kiss as lovers should
And laugh as friends that get to be in one another's
presence.

We could be in London and bored.
Prague and enthralled.
Angkor Watt and thrilled.
or you could show me Milford Sound what you have seen
time and time again
or I could show Budapest and show you what I have seen
time and time again
or the tops of Omul or Mt. Hutt - touch the snow like
we're seeing it for the first time or anywhere I could travel
with you
I am sure of that, anywhere would do for us to share in a
dance
so let us go to Dhaka and watch the protesters tear apart
every last bit of American iconography around us

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we can stop for tea and calmly breathe
as we share our company
I will have missed you and I believe you will
have missed me too
what I would not give, to take your hand and say
let me dance with you while the world
burns around us
would you rise yes I'd hope
you'd whisper
yes, please
our two bodies bound tight, so soft these moments
as if the
long white cloud had manifested them from our
thoughts
so peaceful I don't want them to ever end.
While the protests grow louder. The churn of sirens wail
and the flames of burning buildings warm our bodies.
we dance slowly in the town square – my arms around you
and your
gentle curls around on my neck, rings of safety between us
and the world around.
As the birds pass overhead and no longer wonder.
And the Kiwi shuffles past our feet, pecking in
glee
So delicate they hold one another the wind could send
them apart
So slowly they dance it is as if they move with the rotation
of the earth
So gently they breathe they wish to disturb no one.
So enraptured they kiss without ever realizing that it had
happened.
So intently they stare into each other's eyes they want to
never wake.

ELEPHANTS AND GIRAFFES

'INVITATION'

I invite you to the next stage.
I invite you to let go of all
that remains between you and me.
And to bring us to the next stage.
I promise with all this life to be here
and give you all that you need.
Our story is not one without loss and pain and challenges.
There is still work to be done.
But there are sunrises and sunsets to grow
and change and wrestle
and laugh and run.
I am here.
With all this love.

‘THE VIEW’

The view from
Where I sit.
Sometimes the light off the glass hits
Right where the white stripe was woven.
How many lifetimes have I fallen in love with us.
How many times have we been doing this?
Was I an African princess and sold before our wedding
night?
Were you the knight in shining armor than never came?
Did I pray to you for 50 years after you were swept by a
current?
Did you beg off the last of disease and did you heal my
cancer?
How many times have I asked to sit by your side. How
many passing glances did we share while
the silk scarf slowly was shredded on the mountain top?
When the sun rose today it brought in the next stage of a
great love affair.
When the moon began to rise I saw your reflection in the
road ahead.
8 miles wide.

‘THIS LOVE’

This love
Resounds in the hall
It was announced
Our names read aloud
When you came forward
A deer leapt
And then let go
I swam in all the oceans and then found my form
As a gentle being with deep eyes
I was never into chasing
I would rather build a home
And ask you to emerge
When you're ready
Like a fog
Or the rain
Or snow that comes heavy
Surrounding me.

This love was spoken in the hall of our god
And they said do things that heal others
And we have never known another way
To ever live
And I came to the earth thick and muddy
Slipping over rocks
And gave firmament to abundance
Surround me with your love
And I will give you all the space you need

Together our names were spoken in the great halls of our
mother
And she said eat food together
Build fires which keep you balanced and master the wind
on the water

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And she bestowed us voice
And she gave us touch
And these vessels that only will sink when there is no
balance
When we have not found one another.

And when it was time to leave
They all knew one day we would find the other
Our great light washed across the plains
Through many lifetimes
And only the echo of our names
Resound still
One day we will go home again
And we will tell of our journey
From this light we will always reside
And from this light we do live

ELEPHANTS AND GIRAFFES

‘HEADED TO SKYE’

At the edge of the Forrest
This is the past
And the future
A moment in time
When you decide
To let go of your story
And all that holds you back.
Even before we took our first steps
We took our last
Because we’re always just working it out with god
And what we’ve been asked to handle
I have only leapt a dozen or so times in my life
It’s what I find so freeing about this world and what
brought us
Together.

‘AS IT PERTAINS TO LOVE’

I do not happenstance deal with dalliances any more.
I am only interested in the love of God.
You and I have been coming in and out of our bodies for
so long.
It is often hard to determine where you begin
And where I end
I am sending myself in this plain to you via plane, can you
believe it?
And there it is: our separateness
And yet I am always there
And you are always here.
As it pertains to love I only wish to love God
And in loving you I am loving our God. Every moment I
have with you near my heart I know the earth is rotating
the proper way on its axis
And the sun is so graciously bathing us with its love
Inside of me are all these poems
Why would I not want to leave them at your feet every
morning?
Since God gave them to me
And I am just a humble postman with a crooked glance
who wishes to transmit what we both know to be true
As it pertains to love: there is only you whom I would give
so fully
such that where I am no longer
Me and you are no longer you and there can be no giving
And there is no receiving
Just the sound of our inhale
And then

‘THIS IS US’

On the day we walk away
I am thankful for everything in life
That it took
To bring us together
All of the pain
Tragedy
Sadness
Crappy exes
Amazing parents
Strangers
And priests and teachings and
Dogs and cats and keg stands and passport agents and car
mechanics
Because they all played their part
Of bringing
Your eyes
And mine
Together

Meeting in the midst of all this chaos on the last day
Behind abandoned buildings
And back alley haunts
Our footprints litter
The rubbish of the world
And this place where the stray cats roar
All of it a joyous delight.
This is us, making the whole world delight.

Let me put it this way:
In the jungle you are my light

And the person who I have been praying to all these years
is you.

Let me say it differently:
When I called to my guru
The other night
When you were away
For the 10th hour
And before you came home I sat for 20 minutes of
meditation in your side room and I
Wept off the day
And I sat, and always the same question emerges
“Where are you?”
Or maybe I am asking him?
Or we are asking one another?
Sheesh, I admit— I dunno.
Ram Dass said look for a rascal as a guru, I know I found
mine.
And as I was finishing
The final bell rang and you opened the door
And a new voice said
In response:
“You are home.”

‘DO WHAT YOU’ WANT’

Our love is the light that shines in our souls.
It radiates to everyone around us
it vibrates

in the pit of my stomach
and up and down my spine.

You are my breath and my voice.
My heart opens to you and
it mends bones and tendons
muscles and fascia—slipping away the melancholy
and bereavement

like green algae on rocks
allowing the fluid in our veins to
pump blood to every vessel.

If this not God.
If this is not love
then do what you want with this body.

But I know this love
and I wish to only
be by your side and
fight in countless wars
and travel any distance
and sit in any mediative spot but most of all—
to bare this soul to you and to
always have my eyes
open for your loving grace

‘ON HOW I AM A LEAF’

I don't write all these down someplace, because they come too quickly. They spawn as a natural order:

Just as before you know it,
one day in Spring what was barren,
is suddenly full of life.

I can't help but be surprised
as every poem has its branch
That I hang on Your Majesty.

In this life
My first true friend
Was a large oak tree
That was outside of my home
And every morning
I would give it a big hug
Before we went to school
I was afraid of doing so at first — I admit!
But eventually my ritual was to
Sweetly press my face to
The trunk
And my thin arms tried to go around
The whole way
Thinking this is the way
You love
the world
This way.
And in my heart I knew
I would find love
With someone who would join
Your hand in mine

In another life
I was a leaf
After all
Every one of us is fascinating
Unique
And ever so beautiful
And we all have our time to reside
With her majesty.

I can't be perfect for everyone. Nor can you. Like the leaf
that falls, we must have the seasons
and the tree knows how to let go when it is time.
If our parents taught us anything it is,
“just know when to let go”
I bow to their wisdom.
I bow to where we came from.

Let us have courage in knowing.

So this one sprouted
And became a mantra
Which became a poem
And then became a leaf again that I have asked god for us
to see
And now I offer it to your majesty
To hang.

There may be a time when we need to let go of one
Or the other
We expect one another to change
We demand it
It is the constant. We accept it.
With hope many seasons will have passed

each poem will fall to the ground to nourish the great
world of love
New poems will be written
I promise to keep writing, listening and always
To look directly in your eyes—
With your fingers entwined in mine as we look
Up at all we create and heal together
All these leafs
And caterpillars
And beautiful crows that will dance across
The sunsets and sunrises
And new trees that will rise from the ground
We are all one
We are all one.

I don't write all these down
But this one
I promise to keep you forever in my heart.

'ON THE SNAP'

Lex:

...
Sitting next to you in the bar
...
When we got tea and stared at one another.
...
When I was breathing and you kissed me.
...
When you climbed in bed with me.
...
When we rapped in your car..

Sho: Each one of those moments I could pause for an
eternity in

.

‘PLEDGE’

I believe that we lead many lives,
we mean something different
to many people around us.
Those that I am closest to
I believe we have a special connection.

A private connection and relationship
a coded language that flows
not from the amount of time spent
but something deeper.
I think we traveled together at some point,
I am not so sure how or when
we met before but surely there was a deep bond.
I am here for the duration; however,
we are supposed to walk along
together.
I promise and pledge safety
on this road and to help
and not hinder.

‘WITH YOU’

That is how I feel with you.
We are of the world yet not
That this playground
Where we toss snow
And sand at the other
And go chasing through
Laughter and fierce loyalty
Is to always move
And when rain comes
We will look for shelter
Or just dance in it
I can't help but want every moment
To know how you are breathing
And stare into the Forrest and crags of your eyes
And watch the rotation of the earth
Of my very heart
This fortune of finding one another
This treasure that we hunted for
Like journeying to the pyramids sometimes takes
You to the desert
And me to the jungle
Only means that the heart
Finds a way