

What Is Love? (Baby Don't Hurt Me)

Clara Anderson-Cameron

I.

I met god on a hill in the middle of June
and I asked him about you.

He had a long white beard
and wore flowing robes.

I looked him in the eyes,
I asked him,

"How did you create her?"

He looked confused for a moment,
then answered,

"Like all the rest, my child."

I reminded him that he was not my father,

"My father is shorter and kinder than you are."

Then he shook his head sadly and walked away.

II.

I stumbled into the forest
during a late August thunderstorm, when everything
was hot and wet and I could only see in flashes
when the lightning struck.

And when I *could* see, I think I saw glimpses of you
in the spidery lines of electric plasma
reflected on the glistening green leaves
that were about to turn yellow and brittle in the fall.

Every time the thunder clapped
I screamed up at the clouds,

"What do you know about my love?"

And it just rained and rained and rained.
But as my skin washed off and a new one
grew in its place, I think I understood you
a little better than before.

III.

I fought my way to the top of a mountain
in December, when the wind was angry
and snow became all I knew
and it was so bright, and so empty.

I fell to my knees, all alone
at the top of the world,
so high that I could feel the ceiling
pressing down on my scalp
and my shoulders,
and, like Atlas,

I let it settle its weight, just for a moment,
onto my back.

Then, under the strain of the world,
I asked the sky
where it brushed my cheek,

"Why can't I stop thinking about her?"

And over my creaking bones and
tearing muscles
the sky just hissed back,

"It's heavy, it's heavy."

And I thought I knew you then.

IV.

The answer came to me one night in March,
the first time it smelled like spring
since the onset of winter,
and I was sitting outside on the street,

the pavement cool beneath me,
gulping down the air,
thinking of you. (Always thinking of you.)
And between breaths I gazed up at the night
where the stars winked down knowingly
and I made eye contact with the Moon, where she
hung in the sky, the sun's light glowingly evident
in each crater upon her face.

She seemed so kind, that
on a whim, I asked her about you.
And she said nothing, but started humming a tune
that buzzed low in my chest
like a chorus of river frogs and crickets,
and it felt like warm grass,
and hot sand burning my feet,
and sticky tar,
and religion,
and I knew you then.
Or, I knew this:

You are a prayer,
You are the answer,
You are the hymn,
That pours softly down from the night sky,
Because only the Moon understands.

*(How one person can be everything;
How it feels to love the sun.)*

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