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A Love Poem for a Woman Who Knows Me Too Well

by John Van Rys

I'd like to woo thee well,
in a fashion deserving of thy grace
and wit and tenderness
and gumption.

I'd like to count the ways, but
Betty Browning's beat me to that punch;
to say with bad boy Byron you walk in beauty
like the night, but
you're scared of the dark;
to find thee and me married
in a flea, like metapoet Johnny Donne did,
but we've a dog and know fleas
bite your ankles, make you bleed;
or to reject with Billy Shakespeare impediments
to the marriage of our two true minds, but
too often my mind has been false.

What's left to say, twelve years past:
two kids, a dog, four photo albums holding
our former selves still.

Yet this I know. Beneath the fights
like bruises the blood flows red
and rich; above the cracked plaster
of broken promises the beams are true;
beyond our illegitimate origins, our disgrace,
is grace.

Your laughter ruptures my skin, tickles
nerves, cracks the stone box
entombing my heart. Your tears
erode my barren cliffs and forge a channel
into me. And when you ask again
the fretful question upon which your day
depends, I make my words medicine
for you.

This night of your remembered birth,
this day's separate selves will meet
to celebrate you. Abed, we'll melt
into a pool of warmth the Midwest morning's frost,
the snow that howls about us and within,
beneath a waxing moon.