

Doubledutch



Crystal Senter Brown

DOUBLEDUTCH

CRYSTAL SENTER BROWN

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This book is dedicated to my angels- Sasha,
Lynn, Melanie, and Eugene.

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LOVE POEMS

HE SLEEPS

For Corey

this morning
before you woke up
or even before the sun came up
I watched you sleep
at peace

before the alarm clock
or bark of our dog
before our son stumbled out of bed
I watched you sleep
at peace

your chest
rising and falling
your legs
thick and sprawling
I watched you sleep
at peace

in times like these
you are my everything
when it is quiet
and nothing else matters
I sometimes watch you sleep
at peace

soon alarm clocks will sound
your feet will hit the ground
we will scramble eggs
and brew our java
but right now, I'm watching you sleep
at peace

I love you
I love you
through all we have endured
I love you
I look forward to watching you sleep
at peace

for many more mornings
just
like this...

FEELING 110

39 degrees
comforter doubled up
knees curled
TV blaring

popcorn popped on the stove
with vegetable oil,
sea salt and butter
we eat it out of paper lunch bags

my mane is piled high
in a messy
sexy
knot

wearing your favorite t-shirt
I feel like a teenager again, and

I like that....

our buttery fingers touch
you and I watch each other
instead of the t.v.

the remote is lost
but not needed

because tonight
I control you
and you
control me...

WE STAYED UP LATE

till six am
and ate chocolate centered M&Ms
you put a Fruit Loop on my finger
asked me to be your wife
and I said YES

We
got
dressed

I brushed your teeth
you washed my feet
we fell in love
and celebrated

WE...

THIS IS WHY I LOVE YOU

I fell in love last night,
it's been awhile

I like the feeling of getting up heart heavy,
mind filled with thoughts of you
and me
and life
and time spent with you alone

I fell asleep last night
your kisses still on my nose
and toes
and fingers

the air still invaded with the words we shared as
we planned our future
and house
and babies

and maybe it won't come out that way
maybe you won't stay right here

but all I know is I love this feeling
this heart-heavy feeling
this baby don't ever leave me feeling
this ONLY YOU can give me feeling

this feeling of happiness

of comfort
and strength

and this
is why
I love you.....

LATE..... AGAIN

It is morning, I stretch and wake up
see you lying there, alive
it stops me in my tracks, your eyes
say please come back to bed
and I agree, you
pull me back in
love me deep
and we are
late.

THE HAPPINESS OF INSECTS

november cold
dog sleeps in the
hallway
you will be gone
for a few more days

I eat whatever I want
no diet here
I order pizza
and carrot cake
and my son and I eat
right in the bed

at least the ants are happy
when you are away...

WHO NEEDS MONEY...

scrambled eggs with cheese
rug burned knees
glaring tv

fit you
and me
perfectly.

....SWEET BABY

I forgot how he slept so quietly
and how he didn't snore
or toss in bed
in fact you wouldn't even know he was there
in the dark

I used to count the flowers on the wallpaper of our
room
while he counted sheep
and fell fast asleep
I don't know how
I don't know when
but something had separated our space
all feelings of love had been replaced
all feelings of warmth pushed out by mid-
December

we slept that night back to back
we didn't speak before bed
or linger to kiss in the dawn
I didn't rise sleepily to cook biscuits and gravy
or squeeze fresh orange juice for my sweet baby
instead, I had a muffin

and drove to work...

I NEED

I need
your freckled face
your flat feet
the sun on our backs
coffee and Apple Jacks
babies sleeping
you creeping up to tuck me in
married friends
mimosas on Sunday morning sharing the
newspaper

I need
lovemaking at five a.m.
the sun dimming our room
assuming that time has stopped for us
just *this* day
that I need
your coconut hands dripping sweet nectar into my
mouth

without this pre-dawn re-introduction into
why we walked down the aisle
and jumped the broom

I need
to remember your face the night you proposed

the night we left our clothes on the kitchen floor
the cheese fries
the New York trips
your hands on my hips as I wash the dishes

I need
you to make me feel pretty
put me first
make me smile
stay for awhile
take me back to that first date
when you couldn't wait to kiss me
for the first time....

PARENTING POEMS

TWEEN

I will never understand your style
and how your pants must touch the ground
just to be cool, and how school
is now a great place to
date, get laid, and fight

I remember when school
used to be a
place with
books...

A POEM FOR ADONTE (AJ) AT AGE 7

dirty fingernails
superman underoos
yogurt painted doorknobs

off-key serenades at 7 a.m.
snaggle toothed bandit,
he has stolen my heart

and I am happily overcome
in love
with AJ.

THE BABY INCUBATORS

he is asking me to remove my jeans
I am young
and pregnant

he says *God don't like no woman wearing man's clothes*
so I strip down
and put on the plaid button up dress
with the paten leather belt

his wife braids my hair into two long plaits
I wait for ribbons that never appear
In my 17 years of life I had no plans to become a wife
so I ended up here
to this incubator of babies for infertile Christian families

the plan was simple
girls, ages 11 to 17 would
be flown here, one by one

they would be fed and bathed and cared for
disconnected from the world
and their baby boys or girls would be taken
and given to more fortunate families

they show me to my bed,

it is clean and warm
other girls welcome me with hugs and well wishes
they kiss each other's babies and plan futures that
will never happen
for they will leave their babies *here*

we spend most evenings watching Andy Griffith
re-runs
not much else is allowed
we eat graham crackers and peanut butter

we understand that we are the chosen few
who's sin will allow us to begin again
childless

at bedtime we pretend to read bible passages
and repent our sins
when instead we are scrawling love letters to our
boyfriends
that we never send.

MARIA

goya don't have nothing on her sunday afternoon
display of love-made-home-made dishes
wishing for a better life

she's not good enough for him to wife her
two babies at her ankles
she is trapped

hair, a black curly mane
relaxers were never enough to tame it
pulled back, up high

bangle-sized hoop earrings
wet and wild lip gloss
size 18 jeans
stretched to the seams with
what rice and beans have blessed her with

he comes home
cell phone glued to his ear
her worst fear is right in this two- room flat
she is fat
and a mother
with nothing but
big metal pots
clank
rice sticking to the bottom
burned

sink full of dishes
and nothing to show for her
four-year degree at the community college

her family never calls
her father sends fifty dollar bills concealed in egg
white sealed dollar store envelopes
her own mother passes her on the street
and doesn't speak
her children don't know anything else
other than this room
where doom lives

if she doesn't wake up one day
pack her bags
get on her way

she will look up 20 years from now
and have nothing but 2 teenagers
2 rooms
and \$2.00 to her name

she is ashamed of how
she has let her life go
let her self go
let her spirit go
no room to grow she cooks and eats and sleeps and
lets her life
pass her by...

MAMA

paper plates, peanut butter and jelly
snowy PBS channel buzzing in the background

the scent of generic pine cleaner
no rugs
feet slap-slapping on the freshly waxed wood
floors

no stove
just a hotplate
which you have rigged to work with the cord from
our old electric kettle

you make cheese and tomato omelets
courtesy of WIC
and we watch reruns of Sesame Street

the heat of the middle of July
makes us instant enemies

we trudge back and fourth
in our third floor apartment

we fight about the light bill
my mothering skills
and how much we need a car

as we count change to buy a bottle of wine for
dinner

but you make this struggle easy
you make me believe that we can do anything
once we get past the paycheck to paycheck

you have always
dressed life up in pink ruffled dresses
served it up on a silver platter

I never knew a time of an empty tummy
you made what we had enough

your laughter eases my worries,
you are strong
you are my light at the end of a long day

you stay with me
endlessly
and we
mother and daughter

make this life we are given....wonderful....

BROWN BABY

good morning baby
can I talk to you for while?
tell you how much I love your face,
how much I love your smile?

I can't wait for you to learn to talk
so we can talk about what's in your life
you'll grow to know how much I love you

you're just a baby, but it's already clear
how wonderful you're going to make the next 18
years
I'll teach you how to read
watch you speed around the house on your Big
Wheel
Is this how true love really feels, my beautiful
baby?

you'll know what's right and what's wrong
And I hope you'll listen to positive songs
you'll sit up straight, go to church every week
a prayer-filled life is what I hope you'll seek

and yes, I know I'm jumping ahead
as you role around in your toddler bed
I see the future in your clear brown eyes
I want you to reach the sky!

So hold on brown baby
let me walk you through this life
watch you grow from boy to man
watch you pick the perfect wife

watch you soar above the clouds,
living your life as it should be
I'll be there for you
and if I do it right, you'll be there for me,
my beautiful baby.

COMING OF AGE

SIXTEEN

black biker shorts
two sizes too small
oversized Cross Colors t-shirt
doubled up socks, pink Reeboks
hair to my waist
braided and dusty the West Elementary pool
skin slick from cocoa butter
mouth sweetened with peppermints

we tumble out of our bedroom window into the
bushes
boys from three blocks away meet us
the cute one with the curly hair says I'm pretty
his freckles make me dizzy

sixteen finds me
very much still a country girl,
loving Michael Jackson
and Slick Rick

we use the moon as our clock
careful to make it back home
before Daddy's shift ends...

SUGAR AND PINTO BEANS

back when ponytails and braids
meant you were rich with class
and your mama had money for fried chicken and
pinto beans
Blue Magic and Royal Crown

and you had lunch money 3 days in a row
and your mini braid finally started to grow
and you never had to question if the lights were
paid
'cause you had heat at night and Dawn dish soap
bubble baths
you had red koolaid with dinner
ham and cheese for lunch
and the REAL Frosted Flakes and Fruit Loops

and we appreciated our warm beds
and permed heads
and warm coats

saturday mornings brought transformers
and New Edition
beaded friendship safety pins in our pockets to
share

and your only care was
whether to circle YES or NO

when he asked you to “GO” with him

back when “go” meant
go to the movies
or “go” to the park
we didn’t have to be afraid of walking on our street
after dark

we were
once proud to be chubby
and dusty
and nappy
and simply lovely little girls

unaware of the world that would greet us
10

years

later....

ON HIS MOTHER'S BED

hall pass crumpled
on shag carpeting
ripped jeans tossed aside
knees wide apart

air smells like sweat/ youth
kmart perfume and apple taffy
he is experienced
I pretend to be

he pushes
struggles
tears
hurts
tears stream
and pool on my right cheek

his mother will be home soon

I will be late for 7th period

A true gentleman
he helps me fasten my jeans

we skip across the highway
hand in hand
armed with band instruments and backpacks
we are young

for now...

21 IN CHICOPEE, MA

he's old
they're young
he buys four vodka shots

one for him
three for them
and they down them all at once,

in this
bar where the waitresses
will call them loose
because they'll dance with
anyone
who asks

WITHIN SECONDS

within seconds I transformed from high school girl
to single mom on welfare
while you lived carefree on the eastside

lining your pockets with what could have been a
pair of shoes for baby
or maybe just a pair of socks
I walked eleven blocks to work
traded cheerleading skirts for training pants
and learned to dance the hokey pokey

I got angry at the deception you shoved inside my
ears
after 4 ½ years of phone conversations
and birthday relations with your little boy
toting bags of toys that would satisfy him only for
an hour
ignoring my shower with no hot water
never bothering to ask *Do you have enough food*

can I get you to care for just a day
sort through these past due bills with me
and empty pantries

see if you can find my pride
see if you can make this \$57.00 last from now
until November
I can remember the chill of the hardwood floors

when we didn't have enough money to pay the gas
bill

me loving you
you loving to walk away from responsibility
if only your sweet personality followed you into
fatherhood
who knew the same boy who used to open doors
for me
and pick rose for me
would also allow me to struggle week
after week

I'd rather just erase you from this scene
I'd rather love my baby
and continue to let you love
to walk
away.