



# Twelve Simple Songs





# Twelve Simple Songs

*photos & poems by*

Dave Bonta



*for Rachel*







The long A of your name  
had sounded in my ear for years.  
I looked for you in leaves  
& found you among needles.  
I looked for you on foot  
& found you among the bees,  
golden with the dust  
of unseen blooms.



My parachute knapsack  
held only paper  
& instructions in several languages  
for folding origami wings.  
I even had to supply  
my own shadow  
for a welcoming committee.  
That's what it was like  
being alone.







While others were playing house  
I was playing hermitage.  
Trains blew their whistles  
by day & by night.  
You were in Africa,  
waking to the music  
of car horns & hornbills.  
Had I tuned into the World Service  
in the wee hours,  
I might've heard your stories  
about the fall  
of that dictator from Malawi  
whose last name so resembled my own.



SY BATTLE Rick M.

Chick

GCO

When we first became acquainted,  
you were living  
next door to that Dorothy  
who disappeared into a tornado.  
Your own witch was dead  
but not by much.  
I wrote you a poem because  
I don't believe in spells or prayers;  
it was all I had.







In the first photo I saw,  
you were frowning & looking down,  
unruly hair the color  
of petals on a sunflower.  
You were barely there.  
But through medication  
& meditation  
you turned  
slowly toward the light.



The first time we met in the flesh  
you were a flash  
of bright laughter  
at the end of the table  
where we all convened for coffee  
in Montreal.

Two years later, in Brooklyn,  
you glowed with secret knowledge  
& stretched like a cat  
in the dog-day heat.







Three years after that, I was  
a guest in your London home,  
though like a tortoise  
I brought my own  
sturdy carapace.  
Your house buzzed with  
so much activity, both  
joyful & clamorous, that soon  
my shell began to hum.







Now our words & likenesses  
fly through fiber-  
optic cables under  
the Atlantic. They must  
pass each other  
without knowing it,  
deformed as they are  
into carrier waves,  
broken as they are  
into pulses of light—  
enough to build an entire  
lost continent.





From time to time  
there's a high-  
pitched chirping  
& you say  
it must be from the slime-eels  
nibbling on the cable  
& tying their unbearably  
slick bodies  
into knots.





We've been meeting in  
this disembodied place  
the world-wide web  
so long, levitating  
like Himalayan lamas,  
it's tempting to wonder whether  
we even need the ground.  
Don't the Irish say  
the road will rise up  
to meet us?  
Let's drink to that,  
each raising our part  
of the universal solution  
so our glasses belly  
up to our webcams  
for the clink,  
each blocking our view  
of the other's eyes—a pale  
or stout substitute  
for those blues.





I have four blankets on my bed:  
one is the color of a winter sky,  
one is the color of the river,  
one is the color of the Atlantic ocean  
and one is the color of your eyes.  
Lying under my four blue blankets  
I am warm, too warm,  
I pitch and roll—not like a plane  
in a pocket of turbulence,  
not like a salmon fighting the current,  
not like a buoy in a storm,  
but like a piece of grit  
exiled in a drop of clear salt water  
from the blue of your eyes.







We play a game  
called Mouth & Ear:  
one speaks, the other listens.  
It's simple.  
If your words are trees,  
mine are finches,  
vagrant & garrulous.  
In the nest of your ear  
their fledglings  
sprout fletching.  
If my words are fish,  
yours are lures,  
marvels of ingenuity—  
a water-bound being's  
dream of flight.  
I rise to the ring of ripples,  
your radiant ear.



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