

Poetry Series

**Falfalla Ardroy**  
**- poems -**

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# Falfalla Ardroy()

# The Captain And The Butterfly Book 1

(The Butterfly to the Captain)

My cold and saddened soul  
Cried out to the sea  
For solace.

And the giving, taking sea  
Brought forth to me  
A man of the sea  
Calm and turbulent  
Gentle and strong.

He took my soul  
In his two cupped hands  
And warmed it with his breath  
His kiss, his loving.

It may never be that way again,  
And yet – it is enough.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

Do not say  
"It is enough."  
It is not enough.  
It can never be enough.  
Last night, because God was willing  
we walked upon the earth  
with feet clad in finest silver.  
Last night we rode the heavens  
on angel wings of purest gold.  
Last night we were burned by death's  
chastising fire and we returned  
victorious.  
Last night we were made anew  
by God's own hand in the divine clay  
Of human loving.

Do not say "It is enough"  
Do not bring me this and pretend  
That it is poetry. If you write for me

I want only truth.  
Do not bring me this and pretend  
That it is you. If you are for me  
I want only all of you.  
Do not bring me your tight-lipped  
Protestant parsimony.  
It is not worthy.  
Between us there can be only  
perpetual worship at the altar  
of the universe,  
filled to overflowing with Catholic extravagance.

Your fear has closed your eyes.  
Come to me tonight with eyes wide open.  
Come to me with the poetry of recognition  
of the limitless dark and light  
That resides in the sacred places between  
your elegant feet and your intelligent brow.  
Come to me with a hymn of praise  
for the gift from the Potter's hand  
And together we will walk in  
the holiness that is our I and Thou.  
Anything less is blasphemy.

Do not say  
"It is enough"  
It is not enough,  
It can never be enough.  
My love, this is not the beginning,  
It is not the end.  
There can never be an end.  
Do you not know that  
Yesterday we met  
But together we were born,  
On this day or that  
It does not matter?  
Together we were born.  
And if life or death calls one of us away  
On this day or that  
It does not matter.  
Together we shall be  
For we are made of the same clay.

And only that is enough.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

I saw you

and a slow smoulder began.

Was it the crowning cascade of copper silk that  
framed your face and spilled onto your  
shoulders above your embracing gown?

Was it the roundness of your breasts  
or the curve of your waist or the fragility  
of your so slim hips bearing toward me  
the promise of Venus?

I am a man. I would like to think so.

As you came closer

you turned your face to my first officer  
and I could see the strength and pride  
in your chin and nose.

Your mouth shaped a polite smile and  
then again your feet moved you to me.

When you were almost upon me I  
saw your eyes, deep, but aloof, some  
private amusement lighting them.

And then I saw your mouth with the  
shadow of some great pain upon your lips.

The reception line has brought you to me.

Our hands reach out

and I am burned by the current in our touch.

The aloofness in your eyes replaced by shock.

We exchange the pleasantries. I say, as I always say  
"Welcome to my ship".

But I know - I know that you are not an ordinary woman.

And I - I am no longer an ordinary man.

I find you on the highest deck.

Where else but close to heaven?

And now I hear your voice like gentle rain,  
and fire, and ash, and blood.

In my body all the oceans run and the sky rings out.

I do not touch you, I dare not.

Even here, alone, is too public for such a conflagration.

You talk of the velvety ocean and from this deck  
on my great white ship I see it for the first time.

As in a dream we walk together to the safety  
of my cabin. I am a man. I know what I want.  
My mind is full of the perfume of your hair,  
the promise of your soft tanned body.  
I ache for your breast upon mine and  
my manhood groans within me,  
But I touch my lips to yours and everything is holy.  
The world is filled with angel song and  
I hear your voice calling me from my wilderness  
of empty, passionless, carnal futility.

I discover again that here is no ordinariness.  
Here is the first woman who knows  
of Highland Park - who refuses ice and water,  
and tells me what I know – that whisky must be warmed!  
We talk of Schweitzer, and Neruda, and Allendé.  
We talk of poverty and justice, of Keats and England.  
Of blood, and ice, and fire.

Through the night we talk and I know that  
I am yours and you are mine,  
now, and even unto death.  
As the dawn comes creeping across the Pacific Ocean  
again I touch your lips with mine  
and your eyes tell me what I want to know.  
I carry you to my captain's bed and your light  
transforms this formal, ordered, stewarded space  
Into a bright and fragrant bower of joy.

From your white gown your body emerges  
like Venus from the sea.  
Your sweet hand flutters from its resting place  
on my heart to cover the evidence of your woundedness.  
There is no need. It is the most beautiful guardian  
of your innocence and ripeness.  
I brush it with my lips. You cry out.  
My violent tenderness finds you  
Carissima signora di fuoco  
And together we go into the little death.

(The Butterfly to the Captain) .

All the night, all the night on the great black ocean,  
your voice, your voice embraced me  
and the intoxicating perfume of your breathing  
stilled my fear and banished my pain.  
Your hands remained calm, gently warming  
the glass of precious Orkney gold.  
But all the night you held me in their cup.

All the night, all the night on the great black ocean,  
your words, your words reached for me  
and they carried me on wild and wonderful journeys  
visiting your great and your beloved friends  
from the Pacific to Chil  and Lambar n .  
You gave them to my wondering heart.  
And all the night you held my mind in yours.

All the night, all the night on the great black ocean,  
your eyes, your eyes searched for me  
and they found me in the deep of the water,  
and they found me in the height of the wind.  
They found me in our words and in our silence,  
And in my cold and saddened places.  
And all the night they warmed me in their fire.

At the dawn, at the dawn on the great blue ocean,  
Your arms, your arms lifted me,  
you carried me, to your strong and quiet bed,  
and with my name spoken like poetry  
and with your eyes, your voice, and with your all  
you opened me with your humanity,  
And found me no longer icy girl but woman born of fire.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

(with a debt to Pablo Neruda)

When you walk upon the decks,  
They see you but they do not see you.  
They see your long straight copper hair  
But they do not see your glittering crown  
They see your feet, your strong, elegant feet

But they do not see the red flowers  
That I have strewn upon your path.  
The real and invisible carpet.

When you speak to the people  
They hear you but they do not hear you.  
They hear the gentle girl,  
But they do not hear the blood and fire.  
They hear the grace, the well-bred reticence  
But they do not hear the wild tumult  
That I have heard awakened  
The real and unpredictable tempest.

When I hold you in my vision,  
When I hear you in my soul,  
All the oceans run in my blood  
All the bells of heaven shake my body,  
And a great hymn fills the sky.  
Only you and I, only you and I carissima,  
Can know that we have heard and spoken  
The real and inconceivable truth.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)

When you walk the decks of your great white ship,  
Your strong straight back in crisp dress whites,  
Master of your noble Mediterranean body,  
And commander of the throbbing Leviathan  
Beneath our vacationing feet.  
I see them watching you

I see the women.  
The blue rinsed dowager from Toorak,  
The sunburned Blue Hills matron,  
The nubile girls from their Sydney offices,  
entranced by your urbane charisma and  
intoxicated by your primal magnetism.

I see the men  
The graziers, the boys, the boring bankers,  
Some resentful, some angry, some deferential,  
All aware that their women are in danger.  
of the spell of your courtly demeanour,

and the power of their own imaginings.

I see your crew  
Your officers, and your engineers,  
your stewards and your deckhands  
compliant with your commands,  
bound together in structured obedience  
And freely given, unbiddable respect

They see me.  
Sitting in the shade, oblivious to games.  
Scribbling, or pencil held to lips.  
`They do not know that in an hour,  
Your mouth will replace the pencil  
And we will sing again of fire and death.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)  
You came to my cabin in greatest dread,  
For you were told that the Captain had died.  
Carissima, on every voyage there are  
Daily rumours that the Captain is dead.  
This is why I must be seen in the morning,  
Why I must always be at dinner, why I must  
walk the decks at noon and be at the pools  
And in the bars and everywhere else as well.

This time, of course, there is a grain of truth  
For every night we share the little death  
And every day I walk as if I have gone to heaven.

They see me walking and talking and they think  
"All is well, the Captain is in control."  
They do not know that another commands this Master.  
They do not know that on board there is a butterfly  
Who has stretched her gossamer wings and enfolded  
his aging heart into the radiance of her youth.  
They do not know that she spins her silken thread  
and binds him into the lunacy of loving madness.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)  
Here is wondrous perplexity!  
A few short days ago

I did not know of your existence.  
My life was arctic but safely under control.  
I had a plan and was clear in my direction.  
A few short days ago  
our lives did not touch even at the edges.  
your world of pleasure and command  
to me were a foreign language,  
far away from the path I had chosen  
Of scholarship, service and self denial.

A few short days ago  
The world shifted on its axis  
And unbeknown, unsought, unbidden  
You softly stormed my sanctuary  
And everything was lost  
And everything was gained.  
Here is mystery  
That you in your sophistication  
And I in my solemnity  
Should together find such harmony.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)  
Tonight sweet heaven closed its doors on me.  
Sitting at table with the man I love  
Glowing in the light of your charisma  
And the glory refracting from your admiring entourage  
I was caught up in the fun and laughter.  
And in that lighthearted infectious foolishness  
I told a silly story of some impudent local boys  
Whose gauche attempts at seduction  
Made me laugh – nothing more -  
until your brooding wrath sliced through me  
Excoriating my body and lacerating my soul.

“You sleep with me – it only take five minutes”  
could never compare to the ineffable holiness  
of being broken and dipped and mended  
and dying in the cup of your sacred loving.  
My love, my captain, my king, it is your power  
That has released me from the cocoon of  
sorrow and suffering and introversion  
Your loving has given me euphoric wings

If sometimes the thrill of flying carries me  
too close to the alluring flame  
Forgive your foolish butterfly.  
Your anger tears at my wings  
and I fall into the drowning.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

Last night your presence did not light my cabin.  
At dinner, my jealousy cut you, and I bled.  
With your usual grace you excused yourself  
and took the sunshine from the room.  
I walked the decks, I visited the library,  
I even searched the bars and lounges  
Although I knew I would not find you there.  
You have retreated to your girls' cabin  
And you know that it is out of bounds for me.  
I can only send this letter.

Yesterday morning I saw you leave the ship  
In a soft white sheath of silk, your hair  
tucked up in that ridiculous hat.  
I heard your voice and I heard your laughter  
And I ached to walk the Vila Road with you.  
Last night your silly story made everybody laugh.  
But for me there was no laughter.  
The Vila rain had made your voice sound richer  
The Vila sun had made your light burn brighter  
and I could see men falling into your flame.

You call me prince and talk of my urbanity  
but I am an Italian man and my blood runs hot  
and murderous when I think that other men  
see you as I see you even when I know they must.  
You are my princess butterfly, no, my Queen,  
Not made for common looks and suggestive talk.  
It is my duty to protect the innocence of your soul  
and only I may be engulfed in the purity of your fire.  
Carissima, forgive my green-eyed rage  
Carissima, come back to me.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

You came to me and said

that tonight there could be no loving  
because your woman moon was waning.  
Foolish girl! My silly English butterfly!  
How could you not know  
That this flow that you wish to hide  
Is the flow of life?

You speak as if you hate it.  
How can you hate your body?  
It is the temple of your life  
It is the temple of our love.  
It is the temple of my being.  
And tonight was the night of confirmation

Tonight our loving was the sacred mass.  
I held your holy chalice to my mouth  
And tasted  
your warm, sweet, bitter, woman blood.  
I brought it on my lips  
that you could taste it too.  
And now and forever you are in my veins.  
Your blood, your life, is in my blood  
And you will be with me  
wherever I walk upon the earth.  
I will no longer be desolate  
The spectre of loneliness will never again  
walk with me.  
Even when one of us is no more  
We shall be together in our sacred blood of life.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)

For all my life to have been born female  
has been a source of shame and guilt.  
The curse of Eve  
Has stalked me, and caught me,  
And threshed me  
and cast me in to deepest dungeons  
where I have been glad to hide.

Tonight as easily as if you were  
guiding your great ship into port

you took command of my self-loathing  
and transubstantiated my reviled blood  
into the wine of heaven.

I am ransomed, I am healed and I am restored.  
The searing authority of your reverence  
has purified the once tainted chalice of my life  
And I am transfigured.  
Father of an angel, are you an angel too?

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

Today we found our island.  
In separate boats we came.  
Secretly like thieves  
we stole away from  
gaudy Australians drinking from coconuts  
and brooding Italians dreaming of olives  
and another sun.

Today, my love, we found our island  
Here is no country, no land that is not every land.  
We carry within us the world,  
Your blood in my veins, my seed in your womb.

We laughed and cried and danced  
And knew what life could be  
Away from jealous eyes and suffocating duty.  
We walked hand in hand along the sand  
And rested under breadfruit trees  
With nothing between us but warm tropical air.

And then we swam and I saw you  
With different eyes.  
Your body, until now made only  
Soft and tender for my loving  
Transformed itself into a  
Machine of invincible muscle.  
Your shoulders which had seemed so fragile  
Your legs which until now had only  
opened to me sweet heaven  
sliced you through the water leaving me behind.  
You swam and swam until I was possessed by fear  
That you would disappear beyond the horizon.

And all the light  
in all the world would be extinguished.

Just as my anguish cried out you turned  
and your athlete's body brought you back to me.  
Your eyes are shining bright and clear.  
You take my hands and kiss the salt from my fingers.  
I pull you to me but you escape and dive.  
Your lips are on my toes and on my knees  
And I am drowning in desire.  
The warm water is cold against my fire.

My arms find you and lift you  
and carry you to the water's edge.  
I expect to enter your yielding softness  
But you fall on me; my strong man's body  
Can not match the athlete.  
Your lips burn my face  
Your teeth graze my lips, and bruise my breast.  
Your eyes burn my soul and I am powerless.  
My command is gone.  
My Italian heart is shocked.  
I die in aching surrender  
And I am glad,  
for you have found my wholeness.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)  
Tonight I am transfigured yet again.  
Today we visited what is now our island.  
To go to separate places  
To wait for separate boats  
Was an adventure.  
When I arrived and you were waiting  
Your whites vanished and replaced by  
The island sarong about your waist  
I knew that this was home.  
To be taken in to such illustrious company  
As if I had belonged forever  
Was yet another gift in these days of ceaseless grace.

The talk, the laughter, the dancing, oh the dancing  
the sun on our bodies no longer concealed-

even the ridiculous hat has been discarded –  
freed me in a way that no polemic ever could.  
We walked on the beach and I felt some inner power  
Spreading through my limbs.  
And when we swam my fragility dissolved.  
I did not worry that I left you far behind.  
I wanted you to see my potency  
I wanted you to see the might in my arms  
And the strength of my legs.

I heard your call as I swam toward liberty.  
Were you afraid that I would not return?  
You need not have feared.  
I was swimming away in order to join you.  
I turned and saw you standing arms outstretched  
In painful supplication.

As I swam back to you I felt myself transformed.  
The power of the swim emboldened me.  
I came to you not English butterfly,  
Nor even woman of your fire.  
Today at the water's edge I had my own fire  
It burned you and bruised you and stunned you  
And I saw you die in the joy of submission that  
Usually only women feel.  
My dying came with the scorching power  
I thought belonged to you.  
Now we are of the same clay.  
And only that is enough.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)  
On my right sits the grazier's wife.  
Even here in her evening gown  
in the middle of the blue Pacific  
there is a slight aroma of dust and horses.

On my left the lady from Toorak  
her fingers heavy with diamonds,  
talks incessantly about corgis  
And how the Queen of England keeps them too.

Opposite, my love, are you again

That lovely Zampatti gown off your shoulders  
A single diamond at your throat  
And French champagne raised to your enigmatic mouth.

How I wish I could escape these women  
And become those lucky bubbles  
Slipping past your lips, caressing your tongue  
And wrinkling your captivating patrician nose.

The sheep farmer from Burra Burra  
talks to you of salt bush and blue bush.  
How do you know my English butterfly  
of the complications of feeding merino sheep?

What is this? His hand is on your arm.  
I feel my anger rising but I must be circumspect.  
Your foot moves reassuringly against mine  
You gentle your divine Drambuie eyes at me and smile.

He switches his talk to political matters  
Complaining about the government  
Poor man he has made a terrible mistake  
By directing his personal sneers at your good friend Don.

My lovely, loyal and courageous one.  
"Don is twice the man you will ever be"  
you tell him and you turn your icy shoulder  
I smile and am proud that it is my flag you now carry.

People should not underestimate you my love,  
Those who see only French champagne  
can be frozen by your vermouth on ice  
Especially when you treat them to your twist of lemon.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)

Your green-eyed rage is unnecessary  
It is you who has breathed hope into my anguished soul,  
And made it sing with flowing melody.  
It is you who has captured my cloistered heart  
And ribboned it to yours with the finest red silk.  
It is you who has ransomed my body  
Out of its terrified, frozen captivity

and transubstantiated it into your bread and wine.  
You are the Master of the vessel of my being,  
If you are not at the helm I will founder.  
Do not let the green-eyed rage  
Cause you to take your hand from the wheel.  
And yet, do not banish it from your heart  
It is my sound line, quadrant, compass and anchor.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

Never trust a sailor your mother told you  
And she was right.  
A seaman's life makes fickle men more fickle.  
It is a lonely life and dangerous.  
It makes men take their pleasure  
and comfort where they find it.  
Your mother knew about sailors  
But she did not know about you.

She did not know that her daughter  
is a woman who could take this sailor  
Who has had a thousand women  
And call him from the empty deadness  
of the futile agony of bodies  
to the ecstasy of heavenly union.

Whether you melt for me or ravish me  
Every time you come to me  
You come as the virginal earth,  
The turbulent ocean, the wide bright sky  
And the sacred azure blue of heaven.  
Our loving is wheat and fire and water.  
Filled with God's wholesome justice.

Carissima, I am an Italian man.  
If life should take you from me  
there will be other women.  
But with me they will never know  
The sacred Mass of life,  
With me they will never know our island  
With me they will never know  
The consecrated union of souls  
for mine belongs to you, only you,

even unto death.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)

Your eyes, search me, and find me, and know me.  
Your voice, cradles me, and soothes me, and rocks me.  
Your hands caress me, and accept me, and claim me,  
Your strength confronts me, and stretches me, and holds me.  
Your heart quickens me, and stirs me, and shakes me.  
Your mind delights me, and binds me, and frees me.  
Your body pierces me, and ruptures me, and mends me.  
Your love unfolds me, and blesses me, and enfolds me.  
Thou mastering me, your being brings me into being.

(The Captain to the Butterfly)

We are sailing the Pacific Ocean  
But when I look at you I know that  
I have on board my great white ship  
The essence of the whole wide world.

You are so surely the South Pacific,  
You have in your luminosity  
The white sands and turquoise waters.  
And when you walk I see the suppleness  
of swaying palms.  
When you swim I know that you are right  
And your totem is the dolphin.

But when we dance we leave the South Pacific.  
We waltz and you take me to Vienna  
Or to the gentility of the Court of St. James.  
You come close and we are barely moving  
But I know we are in Aznavour's Paris.  
And now that I have taught you to tango  
you bring the heat of Argentina  
and my ship is ablaze with Spanish fire.

We talk and my cabin becomes the classroom.  
You bring me philosophy and theology  
From America and England.  
You speak of the Celtic insights of  
your father and your forefathers,  
You share your mother's Hebraic wisdom.

And you take me to the outback and the caves  
and waves of your beloved Australia.

When you come to me in your nakedness  
we sail upon different oceans,  
and we fly to different lands.  
In your purity I find the temples of Tibet,  
And my cabin is filled with sacred lotus flowers.  
The playful butterfly takes me to the Caribbean  
And I feel the sparkle of steel drums and taste  
the rhythm of calypso upon my sheets.  
And then there is Africa. Africa, oh Africa!  
When you are Africa, I see the heart of darkness,  
And feel the miracle of fear dispelled by passion.

I have traveled the world on dirty old cargo ships  
And magnificent liners of sophisticated elegance,  
But in your words and in your touch  
And in your silence and in your secret smiles  
You carry me in our ship of loving on all the oceans  
And to all the lands of this beautiful earth,  
But I beg of you, my love,  
Never take me south to Antarctica.

(The Butterfly to the Captain)

I lie quietly in your bed  
And watch your sleeping eyes.  
Next to seeing their wide open fire  
I love to see them gently closed in sleep.  
Your noble head resting quietly on the pillow  
Haloed by the strong tender light of your soul.

Your light is not a simple glow,  
There is the blue of your powerful mind,  
The purple of your sanctity and  
The white of your integrity.  
And then there is the ruby light which  
Tells of the heights and depths of passion.  
They are all encased in the silver and gold  
Of your holy covenant with heaven.

I lie with you sleeping beside me

And watch your magical mouth.  
Your lips which can rap out curt commands  
And roll out loving soubriquets,  
And disarm antagonistic men  
and beguile the coldest woman with their smile  
are now a quiet portal for your holy breathing.  
In an hour we will kiss each other awake  
And give our thanks for another day  
In the glorious song of life.

How could I not love you?  
I am captivated by your charisma,  
Apprehended by your magnetism  
Liberated by your justice,  
Raised up in your righteousness,  
Cloven and restored and brought to the altar  
by your passion.  
How could I not love you?  
Who, seeing what I see could not love you?

(The Captain to the Butterfly)  
Your friend Don is right,  
You do justice to white  
In white your innocent purity is brought to light.  
When I see you walking among the people  
your strong, fragile body  
sheathed in that white silk dress  
of the Vila Road,  
your copper hair falling, falling.  
the sun caressing your golden skin  
the ridiculous hat shading your honey eyes  
I know that there are angels.

Your friend Don is right.  
You do justice to cream.  
In cream your sophistication is underlined.  
When you walk into dinner  
as if you are Venus on the catwalk  
embraced by the Zampatti cream  
your copper hair held high by the diamond clip  
the softened light brushing gold dust  
on your shoulders and arms and face,

I know that here is no girl  
but my woman of the fiery night.

But he is not altogether right,  
Your good friend Don.  
For in the turquoise caftan,  
You paid too much for in Suva,  
Your deep honey eyes turn to iridescent gold  
Your puzzling mouth twinkles at the corners  
The copper crown flickers and floats  
And you become the playful butterfly.  
Then there is the Zampatti handkerchief  
Layers of pink from pale to hot.  
When I see you in that  
I remember I am twice your age.  
And my heart weeps for us.

When you come to me in life,  
when you come to my grave,  
wear white, wear cream,  
wear turquoise blue or shocking pink.  
Come in your nakedness,  
but never, my Lady of the Light,  
never come to me in Italian black  
or my heart will weep again.

Falfalla Ardroy

# The Captain And The Butterfly Book 2

(The Butterfly to The Captain)

Aboard this ship I have avoided the dancing  
Not because I do not like to dance.  
But because we only dance together in private  
For fear of displaying the fire between us.  
Tonight at dinner you begged me to come  
To the Captain's Farewell Ball.  
I come only because you plead but I know  
That it will be agony for me to watch  
You hold all those other women.

The Captain's waltz begins  
And I can see them all straining to be anointed.  
I am sitting with the Toorak dowager,  
And her boring banker son.  
There is also Lydia the grazier's wife  
Still accompanied by dust and horses.  
There are two of the Sydney girls and  
The men they have collected on board.  
On my left sits your trusted Carlo.  
It has not been said, but I understand  
that tonight his duty is to guard my honour  
and protect you from the green-eyed rage.

You stand and I can hear the intake of  
feminine breath across the room.  
It is no wonder. You are so very beautiful.  
Your eyes are warmer tonight, your step  
Seems lighter and the worry lines are gone  
from your brow and from around your eyes.

You move toward our table and  
the dowager puts down her glass.  
Lydia sheds her stole and the Sydney girls shuffle.  
For me there is cavernous longing  
which keeps me still for  
I know you will not dance with me in public.

As you walk toward us my eyes close  
Against the tears of anger  
that you can be so cruel as to  
choose someone sitting close to me.  
Carlo nudges me and I look up  
to see your outstretched hand and hear you say  
In your strong clear master's voice  
"Will you dance with me and wear my ring, my Queen?"

(The Butterfly to The Captain)

It is the day of disembarkation.  
At dawn, I stand on the foredeck  
And watch with awe as you guide this  
beautiful vessel into Circular Quay.  
So this is why all ships are "she".  
Watching you as you stroke her, you coax her,  
you command her, and you love her  
into doing exactly what you want of her  
it feels as though I am watching you  
as you master me.

Last night we lay together in tenderness and pain  
Knowing what this day would bring.  
As we parted you told me to be last to leave the ship  
and asked me to wait for you at Customs  
although it could be hours before you were free.  
And it was – three and a half long hours  
but merely a tick of our eternity.  
Then you are beside me and take my hand.  
We walk the Sydney streets without circumspection  
We lunch together and hold hands across the table.  
You say you feel nineteen and I say  
that would make me a cradle snatcher.

We go to an Anglican church and  
Kneeling together before the altar  
We exchange the crosses we wear  
And your friend David  
generously, graciously celebrates the Eucharist for us.

□

I see you on the boat deck, uniform gone,  
for on this voyage you are a passenger.

I am standing on the Quay joined to you only  
by this trail of invisible red silk ribbon  
and the kisses we blow each other.  
As your great white ship slowly floats away  
my tears begin to flow, and you salute me.

A sword is piercing my heart,  
There is molten lead where my knees once were  
My hands are shaking and fire is scorching my throat.  
I lean against the railing for support  
And watch you until you are out of sight.  
I cannot move. My body is not my own.  
My love, my Captain, my King,  
I am dying until we are together again.

(The Captain to The Butterfly)

Now you are away from me  
I must write in English  
I can no longer rely  
on you to create English poetry  
from my stumbling broken words.

It was a mistake to come on this voyage.  
I should have stayed with you in Sydney.  
My heart was breaking to see you sobbing.  
I have never felt so weak, so old.

From Sydney to Lautoka I slept and read.  
Keats and Neruda and Ardroy.  
You are in illustrious company, my love  
But now you are a poet you deserve to be.

I left the ship at Lautoka and spent a  
day on our island. I walked the beach  
that speaks of the Refiner's fire  
Which burnt our clay together  
Carissima Falfalla, I ache for you,  
your voice, your touch, your eyes, my centre.

(The Captain to The Butterfly)

It is your birthday and  
I hold you in my spirit arms

And kiss you with my spirit mouth  
And dream of an island sun which  
will bless all the birthdays to come.

The company is in turmoil.  
They need a senior man in Saudi and Jordan  
where there is trouble. Curse my seniority  
Curse upon curse, upon curse, upon curse.  
I am to be Acting Port Captain in Jeddah  
while they search for a replacement.  
At the very name of Jeddah  
The goose is walking down my spine.  
Can you wait while I do this one last thing?

(The Captain to The Butterfly)  
The desert sun burns brightly black.  
Here there is no colour,  
There are no movies, no Mass,  
I cannot even wear your cross.

There is no Highland Park,  
No French champagne, no Drambuie  
Not even any vermouth on ice  
There is only bitter, bitter lemon.

And there are no women.  
They tell me the women do exist  
Under the great black tents they wear  
But I cannot see them.

You know, Carissima, that I am yours  
But I am a man, I am an Italian,  
I am Michelangelo, I am da Vinci,  
I am Verdi and Vivaldi,  
I am Mazzini and Garibaldi  
I want passion for my soul  
And feminine beauty for my eyes.  
Carissima, are you well enough to  
come to me?

(The Captain to The Butterfly)  
Yesterday you came to Jeddah.

The desert sun was burning bright  
But you overpowered it with  
Your glowing moon of silver light.

Forgive me carissima, my innocent.  
Because I was late those black hearts  
At the airport humiliated you.  
I should never have asked you to come.

You lay trembling in my arms all night  
And I cursed my selfishness.  
This hell is no place for my Queen  
It is no place for my family.

And now you have gone.  
The silver moonlight you  
Left in my apartment is fading.  
This place is breaking my heart.

(The Captain to The Butterfly)  
My love, my life  
My heart is breaking for you.  
My heart is breaking for us,  
I am so sorry I cannot come to you.  
My mother, my sons, my duty, my heart?  
I hold you in my spirit arms  
And pray that you will be well.  
For the rest I cannot speak  
For now the word is gone.  
Soon I will come for you.  
'Nshellah.

(The Captain to The Butterfly)  
Carissima, my darling, my light, my life.  
This was a day like no other.  
You met me from the train wearing  
the cream silk we bought in Suva  
covered by your scholar's gown.  
The orchid I sent you in your copper hair  
What an exotic vision among the dreaming spires.  
At the sight of you my body sheds twenty years

Today beneath the Byrne Jones windows  
you stood in the pulpit where Tagore once stood.  
And yet another light shone from you.  
You read from Whitman on miracles  
I sat entranced by the velvet of your voice,  
the depth of your learning,  
and the beauty of your heart.  
I know "Of Life, Love and the Scottish Psalter"  
Was a sermon meant for me and I am so proud.

At last we escape from lunch at the Master's table.  
For someone with a romantic view of Oxford life  
it was such a disappointment.  
Where was the ceremony, the élan, the wine?  
The English have such boorish manners  
They do not honour their women.  
I expected the Master to surpass me in  
What you call urbanity and yet  
he is a parsimonious tyrant.  
Do not let him bully you my love,  
For I will kill him if he does.

But now we are free and you  
take me by the hand and show me places  
I know only from books.  
The Bodleian and Balliol, Magdalen and Merton,  
Christchurch, the Camera and Carfax.  
To walk where once walked  
Ruskin and Berlin, Lawrence and Hopkins,  
Lewis and Swinburne and Southey,  
With my Queen as my cicerone.  
What joy, what privilege.

Punting on the Cherwell I remember our day  
On the island.  
Again I marvel at your strong young body  
And the authority of your will  
As you insist that this is your ship,  
That you are the captain  
and I am the passenger.

No longer can I call you English butterfly,

My lovely, my dearest scholar priest.  
Here is where you belong,  
from the pulpit you must make your mark  
for the suffering world needs your insight.  
Would there, I wonder, be room for  
A tired old Catholic sea captain  
in your congregation?  
Will it be I who follows you to Siberia?

(The Butterfly to The Captain)

Light shining through the Byrne Jones windows  
Martineau's marble effigy benignly overseeing,  
I am surrounded by old and dusty tomes,  
the collected wisdom of long revered heroes  
and challenging new acquaintances.  
For a moment I think that I could forsake all  
womanly preoccupations and spend my life  
in this ivory tower among the dreaming spires.  
The excitement of the mind goes along way  
to filling the aching caverns of the heart.  
But then, a sound, a smell, a thought,  
a memory in my limbs, a light behind my eyes,  
and your absence convulses through me.  
Hours pass, the crying subsides.  
Nothing lasts forever, and you are not here.

Falfalla Ardroy

# The Captain And The Butterfly Book 3

(The Butterfly for her Captain)

All the light in all the world has been extinguished.  
The music is stilled. The birds no longer fly and the  
The flowers no longer bloom.  
My blood no longer flows for there is no longer heart.  
I have no longer flesh for it has been flayed from  
my bones, and my bones have been crushed  
by the weight of the world.  
Where my breathing was there is only silence.  
Where my thinking was there is only void.  
Where my fire was there is only ice.  
While he walked upon the earth  
My blood was in his veins and  
His love was in my every cell.  
And it was enough.  
But now there is no blood, there are no cells.  
The heart of my blood, the blood of my heart,  
The light of my dark, the dark of my light,  
The soul of my word, the word of my soul,  
The joy of my body, the body of my joy,  
My Love, my Captain, my King is dead.  
And I, I am condemned to life.

(The Butterfly for her Captain)

You are gone and with you  
The sun. All light is gone  
all sound, all sense,  
all movement, all purpose.  
There are no longer projects  
to occupy the long empty minutes,  
the little passing hours,  
the endless barren days.

This is not sorrow,  
this is death of all sensation.  
There is only sightless, soundless surrender.  
There is no yearning on the silent tongue,  
There is no longing in the listless limbs,

There is no breathing in the shrunken lungs.  
There is chilled congealing of the blood.  
There is cellular disintegration of the heart.

This is not sorrow.  
Sorrow has a gentle hue  
But here there is only monochromatic scything  
that slashes my being and hacks  
silent screaming from my throat.  
The Cartesian demon has me in his grasp.  
There is no longer world.  
There is no longer life.

(The Butterfly for her Captain)  
Today I was sent a photograph of him.  
Across a continent and our great blue ocean  
came this virtual image of a man  
who only ever wrote with pen or typewriter.  
The lost love of twenty six years.  
Sixty seven years old he would have been,  
Still master of a great white ship.  
Four bars now on his epaulettes.  
And still so very beautiful.

Same broad shoulders, same slim waist,  
Same straight, strong, aristocratic back.  
Same deeply smiling Mediterranean eyes.  
Same sacerdotal mouth that turned my  
wretched body into a sacred temple.  
His charisma, his authority, his vitality,  
shines from my computer screen  
even as he lies now in his quiet grave.

Today I discovered the awful lie of  
"Time will heal all wounds".  
God of mercy, if I must live  
take this longing from my limbs  
remove this rupturing of my heart.  
Dispel this tormenting torture of tears,  
this bruising brutality of breathing.  
God of Grace,  
I cannot endure this agony of loss.

Grant me peace or let me cross to him.

(The Butterfly for her Captain)

My Love, my Captain and my King  
you are gone from me, from earthly life.  
No tears of mine will return to me  
the sweet brush of your lips against mine.  
No cries of anguish will return to me  
the deep warmth of your loving eyes.  
No agony in my limbs will return to me  
the fire and peace of our bodies united.  
I will never again hear your laughter,  
or the commanding resonance in your voice.  
Never again will I soothe your rage  
or feel your strength as you hold my trembling.

What remains is the memory that once  
our feet were clad in finest silver  
and we flew on wings of purest gold.  
What remains is the real and unimaginable truth  
that you found me in the deep of the water,  
and you found me in the height of the wind.  
and from our wastelands we found each other.

What remains is the truth of being  
held together in the Refiner's hand,  
of being born together in blood and fire and ash.  
and that my blood was in your veins  
and you are in my every cell.  
What remains is our eternal and sacred Eucharist,  
Our thanksgiving for the days and nights of confirmation.

Sail on my Captain, Reign on my King,  
May you have fair winds and velvet oceans  
and may angels of light be your crew.  
The sting of death is fleeting.  
The victory of the grave is ephemeral.  
I hold the door ajar for your noble spirit  
that you may come softly in to  
walk with me and talk with me  
and master me on into the great adventure,  
the boundless song of life and death.

Together we were born, together we are  
and together we shall be  
for we are made of the same divine clay  
and we sail the same sacred oceans.  
Namasté, my Captain, Namasté.

Falfalla Ardroy