

Poetry Series

Toni Atchison

- poems -

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Toni Atchison(03/15/61)

I was born in Lincoln, IL. in 1961. My parents divorced when I was quite young, and my mother remarried, to a man she'd been crazy about for years. My step-dad has been my dad since I was 3. My extensive family is still around this area. When I was about 7, we moved to Taylorville, and I spent most of my youth and young adult life around that area, until around 1991, when I moved to Bloomington. There, I lived and worked until I met my husband, Dennis. We lived in Atlanta until we seperated and eventually divorced in 1998. In '98, my daughter, April, and I moved to Indiana, where we worked in a factory. I met the woman who inspired the poem 'Apologies to Nosa' at that factory. When the plant shut down, we remained friends, and to this day continue to write, email and text back and forth.

My daughter and I moved back here, to be near family, mostly because my dad's health isn't the best anymore. She just bought her very first house, at the age of 28, and this is where we live now.

A Girl Of Fifteen

(for Ais Jaime)

oh, to be young again
as a girl child of fifteen!
Poised grandly on the brink of discovery
between worlds without and within.
To have the universe at your feet,
a future of uncertain delights.
Some tears, some laughs.
The times good or bad-
no gray areas to color life.
Thoughts of love and future as yet unmet,
but one thing's to be sure.
To be a young woman at fifteen
is to be queen of your share of the world.

2/25/08

Toni Atchison

About Nikki

My cat would be a lioness-
(if lioness' have a favorite blanket to sleep on,
and little plastic jingly balls to
bat fiercely under the sofa,
or someone to rub her ears or feed her
every night at exactly the same time.)
Oh, my cat would be queen among fierce beasts-
(if someone would let her in from the rain
to claw up the curtains,
or let her drink iced tea
right from their own glass.)
So someone needs to follow my cat
as she live a life so wild,
and carry her blanket, toys and food,
and rub her ears and keep her dry
and serve her cold iced tea.
So someone else should go with her,
I ask for pity's sake,
cause I do all that here at home-
and I could use a break!

2006

Toni Atchison

Absence

Dream of me lover,
when I'm not there
and your arms are empty
for want of me.

Think of me lover,
my lips on your skin
and your mouth is unkissed
for want of me,

Remember me lover,
while I'm far away-
 the touch of my hair,
 my hand on your cheek,
 the scent of my skin,
 when I'm not there-

think of me, lover.....

4-10-08

Toni Atchison

Ahh, Dance!

Like a tango of sweet romance
do our hearts beat in perfect time-
one to another,
rhythm of my lover.
Passion's fire is mine,
to the sound of your voice.
Dancing partner to your lips
shakes my hips.
Laughter and sighs,
such a sweet refraine.
Skin to skin, the bridge between.

2008

Toni Atchison

Alone In The Dark

darkly, darkly
I wander the night,
without friend or care.
No hand to hold,
no shoulder to lean on.
But don't pity me
my solitude-
this is a joyous time for me.
The starry sky is my blanket,
the darksome woods my bed.
No unhappy spirit am I,
I wander content in the night.
Though sleep escapes me,
though dreams elude me,
still I wander along,
happily.

3-3-08

Toni Atchison

Apollo In Candlelight

How candlelight loves my lover.
It catches his eyes of green
and turns them into jeweled orbs,
sharp and precious-
seeing all, judging none.
It carves his beloved face
into a study of amber light,
so like a Greek god of old-
brought to new life in him.
The light of the candles
chases his hands as they move
along my skin.
I become his painting-
of light and shadow,
a study in honeyed light,
countered by jet.
It turns my tears to saffron jewels,
my sweat to amber,
precious gifts to him.

3-27-08

Toni Atchison

Apologies To Nosa

My dear friend,
how long has it been
that I have put pen to paper
and transcribed my soul to you?

Do I tell you of sunsets
and sundogs I've seen,
or the Thanksgiving snowstorm
when I spun my car
in the middle of the highway?

Or shall I tell you of
the bejeweled lustiness
of my houseplants that seem
to multiply behind my back?

Would you hear of my backaches
or bellyaches or heartaches,
or how long my hair has grown,
and the color I use now to cover
the gray I so want to hide?

Maybe I should write you
of how my life has changed
since we became friends,
and how I so hope
I have touched yours too.

Perhaps I should tell you
of how we're connected
by some warm bond,
unseen and unbreakable.

Or can I tell you how,
even when I don't write,
I think of you often and fondly,
and hold you dear in my heart?

2005

Toni Atchison

Autumn

The summer that seemed to go on forever
has finally come to an end,
and autumn has firm control now.

But fall has a lingering sweetness this year,
and the days still are so warm and bright.
They are days the color of honey.

10/24/07

Toni Atchison

Bedtime, Part Two

And now, at last, the time has come
to rest my weary head.
To take my words and dreams and hopes
and put them all to bed.
My mind has followed my heart today,
no matter where it led.
And so I lay me down to sleep
and rest my weary head.

2006

Toni Atchison

Before The Rain

tonight it feels
it smells
it looks like rain,
and it seems to me I wear it
like a damp woolen cloak.
And a moon so full
lights a midnight sky,
banked in silk scarves
all in pearl colors.
There's a scent of big waters,
oceans and great lakes
and great rivers
to perfume the air.
I'm restless and achy
waiting for the storms,
for thunder and lightening
and the cleansing summer rain.

July 2009

Toni Atchison

Bitter Love

Oh, that you could steal my heart!
I don't know how or why
but you've taken it from me,
and this torrent of words
comes nowhere close
to exorcising the agony
of my torment.
I seek solace in your arms,
the touch of your hand,
the sound of your voice...
all serve to heal my wounds,
to soothe my soul-
but still you hold my heart.

2/18/08

Toni Atchison

Can I Be Beautiful In Your Eyes, Love?

Can I be beautiful in your eyes, love?
Could I hold you close,
no matter where you are?
I'm trying to remember me before you.
But I don't think I was alive then -
not truly alive -
till I was set on fire inside,
and it warms me to think of you.
I crave your touch -
for the first time,
for the thousandth time.
So tell me true -
Can I be beautiful in your eyes, love?
Can I swim fearless and unashamed
in those twin pools of cool blue?
Can I press my chest to yours
and feel our hearts beat in time -
my imperfect one
and your wild sweet one,
echoing the beat of the other?
And oh, by the way,
just in case I forgot to ask -
Can I be beautiful in your eyes, love?

1-19-09

Toni Atchison

Chimes

I have two sets of chimes on my porch,
hung there to sing in the wind.
One set of delicate rods,
silver hung from bamboo,
lovely sweet Pan Pipes.
The slightest breeze tickles them,
making them sing and dance-
running a fairy-song up and down the scale.
The other set is more masculine,
six hefty tubes of brass.
No mere breeze moves those
testosterone chimes,
or ring them in delicate tones.
These are the storm chimes,
ringing out only when the quickening wind
shoves rudly with indelicate hands-
but, oh! the glory in that strike!

6/1/07

Toni Atchison

Dancing Witch

There's a witch that lives inside of me.
She dances in a moonlit forest glen,
decked out in custom sky-clad robes,
to the wailing of a wild fairy band.
Oh, I pity her at times.
She's set free to dance
only in the landscapes of my dreams.
But I envy her always-
she has the confidence to dance.

9/23/07

Toni Atchison

Depression

Once again I ride the downward spiral.
Having climbed the mountain,
I somehow missed the peak
and slid all the way down to the other side.
Oh, to walk the expanse of level plain!
But all I find are ever-deepening valleys.
Truthfully, I wax melodramatic
at each tiny stone in my path-
fearful of the boulder
around the next bend.

7-25-06

Toni Atchison

Desperation's Love Song

If I sacrifice myself
on the alter you call love,
could I justify myself-
or would you turn and walk away,
taking all the pieces of my heart?

If I offered you myself
in your sacred space within,
could I prove to you my worth-
or would you simply turn away,
shaken to your core at what you've wrought?

I have nothing else to give-
not jewels, fame or gold.
There's only me, a tiny spark,
despirately groping in the dark.
So take my hand- pull me in,
let's both share our lonely light.
'Cause I'm cold, and you're so near,
stay with me, just for awhile,
and rescue me from the night.

9/23/07

Toni Atchison

Eclipse Moon

Trecherous moon,
that earth-shadow across your face
should affect me so.
Red blush deepens
as the eclipse goes on,
but why should I feel this way?
The tidal urge grows strong,
desire for touch deepens,
the need to be-
to feel-
to love.

2/21/08

Toni Atchison

Epitaph For Summer

Full moon sails high behind
a shroud of cloud tonight.
Though she is aging,
the shroud she lines in silver
is not her own.
I think it is for summer.
It's a mid-August midnight sky
that hides in summer storms.
I watch the dark clouds pick up
a hint of orange from the city lights.
And I know that, all too soon,
those clouds will be full of snow.
Then the warm summer moon will turn icy
as she fling rhinestones and glitter
on the sleeping earth below.

Aug.2006

Toni Atchison

Erotica, Part One

(for Gust D, inspirer of poetry and insanity)

My lover lays me down
on sheets of cool cotton,
ice to my fiery skin.
Binding me with love and silk,
the mastery of his hands
lifts me to new heights.
He is my lord and master,
my torturer and savior,
stoking my heat higher
with fuels of passion and pain-
one and the same.
My nose and mouth full of him,
his sweat like the dew,
his essence of ocean...
I would die to drink of him.

2-11-08

Toni Atchison

For April

I tell you every day I love you-
but I don't think I say often enough
what the limits of my love for you are.
If you asked, I'd give you the world,
in a silver-sweet package,
beribboned with rainbow string.
I'd set the moon herself in a ring
to grace your beloved finger,
so you'd never be alone in the dark.
The stars I'd sprinkle in your hair,
like blazing snowflakes from some far-flung cloud,
or encircle your neck in stellar jewels.
My life has been yours since
the day you were born-
I set myself between you and the world
to protect and shelter you when needed,
to step aside when you were ready,
to stand behind and catch you if you fall.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison

For Gust

page on page I write anew,
giving vent to my desires.
I read my soul to you warily,
carefully,
a timid inner child.
You gasp in mental ecstasy,
emotion fills your voice.
And everytime I'm struck again
at the wonder of your love.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison

For John

(dedicated to John Hamilton, weird friend but true)

I heard your voice last night-
for the first time in almost ten years!
We both got older;
you had a heart attack,
I could only counter
with a recently broken heart.
And as we played catch-up
on our lives and loves,
time fell away quickly.
I love how you
can still make me laugh,
and that goofy giggle you do.
After a four-hour chat
about kids and kin,
one thing I know for sure-
 I missed you, my friend.

6-26-08

Toni Atchison

Forever Spring

In my mind, I see the flame of autumn
or the crystalline beauty of winter snow.
It seems I always long for seasons' past,
seldom paying tribute to the present.
This year is different though-
for spring refuses to leave.
And here is June, I still sleep
with a quilt on my bed.
And the fresh soft green refuses to age
to the hard tired green of summer.
Lovely spring has come to stay.
The nightly succession of
diamond stars and sapphire sky
is only occasionally veiled in gray.
Even the sunlight is sweeter than summer,
a kinder caress to the skin
than the hammer-blows of full-flung heat.
I almost hope it never ends.

6/12/06

Toni Atchison

Good-Bye

(for Gust)

What right do I have to cry?
this broken heart
was of my own making.
We say we'll stay friends,
and talk sometimes.
Until the distance
grows between us
and the days between our talks.
And one day, I'll forget your voice-
 I miss you already.

6-10-08

Toni Atchison

Hard-Hearted Lover

There is no mercy
inside you for me;
no tender touch
of a lover's hand.

You push me
and study me,
looking for weakness,
ready to pounce.

Your voice in my ear
demands more and more,
accepting nothing less
than my all;
offering nothing less
than everything.

I am a willing addict,
worshipping at your altar,
kneeling at the gate,
begging to come inside.

No protests from this womanly heart-
I want what you offer.

7-21-08

Toni Atchison

He Called Me Tonight

He called me tonight
and I cried.
Didn't know how much
I missed his voice.
Jealous that she hears him now,
unhappy 'cause she has
what was once mine.
I walked away! !
Gave up my claim-
why does my heart still ache?
He called me tonight
and I cried.
Forgot what he does to me....
remembered I used to love him.

7-13-08

Toni Atchison

How I Miss You

And how I miss you
since your love has gone.
I miss your voice
and how you made me laugh,
the touch of your hand,
and your lips on mine.
The heart gets better, day by day-
I don't cry now when I think of you.
But oh, how I miss you
since your love has gone.
I miss being your love,
and being your best friend,
and the stories of your family
you'd tell me in bed...
and oh, how I miss you.

6-23-08

Toni Atchison

I Stand Before You

I stand before you as a child,
innocent and untaught,
a willing student at your hand.
I stand before you as a person,
alone and strong,
afraid yet eager to know you.
I stand before you as a lover,
passionate and inspired,
anxious to give and take whatever you desire.
I stand before you as a woman,
free and open,
before you, offering my heart.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison

I Wanna Gedda Tattoo

I wanna gedda tattoo-
even though I'm an over-weight
white-bread forty-something
single mom,
living in down-town cow country.
Yep, I wanna gedda tattoo-
that shows how cool I really am inside,
and that I could ride a Harley if I wanted
(and if that Sportster really is small enough
for someone barely five foot tall!)
Oh, I really wanna tattoo-
I've planned it all out in my head,
of a leather-clad fairy
who surfs a midnight city sky
on a lightening bolt and reminds me
of this wild woman inside me
I keep in chains.
One day, she'll break free,
but I won't be upset-
she's always got my back.

9-23-07

Toni Atchison

In Those Days (We Could Dance)

In those days we could dance.
For our hearts and bodies were not so old
that they could forget what a joy there was
in that freedom of movement.
And in those days we could climb every mountain,
for nothing was too high
or too far
or too scary for the likes of us.
And I remember loving the wild stormy nights,
the sweet days that lasted forever,
the scent of you on my skin.
I remember those days,
because in those days, we could dance.

3/17/10

Toni Atchison

January Rain

I don't love January rain-
at least, not like I used to.

Maybe it's being in a different house
on this dirty, noisy street.

I never used to feel this way-
January rain used to make me happy.

But the cold rain now lapping at my windows
reminds me my eyes have begun to betray me,
and my joints ache when the weather comes in,
and the silver gray clouds have begun to match my hair.

Jan.2006

Toni Atchison

Jim

I wonder how you made it
inside my inner sanctum.
Breaching barriers carefully erected
to keep the world at bay.
And then I hear your voice.....

When you say my name
in that certain way,
I can hear all in one word-
passion and pride,
a need so powerful
it shakes you to your core.
And I yearn for you.

To see your eyes,
to feel your hands,
for the taste of whiskey
and cigarettes on your lips.
Ambrosia to an addict.

Set me free to wander your mind;
to bask in the light of that huge intellect-
light and sharp as a blade.
I wander aimlessly, happily...
lost in you.

8-2-08

Toni Atchison

Lavender In The Snow

It seems as if another year
has slipped by me.
I, of course, remained
obtuse and wholly unaware.
Till some mundane task
of everyday life
pulled me from my warm hermitage,
out into the world that lives
outside these sheltering walls.
And into my blissful blindness
comes a ray of shocking light,
and with one foot on the Earth
and one on worn wood steps,
I looked outside myself
and saw lavender in the snow.

12/7/07

Toni Atchison

Love Song

Somewhere in the realm of candle,
the light strikes a beam from your eyes.
A lover's voice calls a name so soft,
hands touch warm cheeks and thighs.
Lips coax sighs in voices tempered
by desires of skin to skin in cotton sheets,
a unified movement like ocean waves.
Scent of love and sweat perfumes the air,
tasted in gasps and moans so sweet.
Bodies intertwined in an ageless dance,
the cycle that renews us forever.

3-29-08

Toni Atchison

March

Listen to the spring wind hoot
and holler round the corners of the house.
Trees dance mad as the wind moans
and groans between the houses.
The lion has come to March,
which has been lamb-like until now.
And all the wee small children of the sun
come slow and blinking from winter dens,
and sunset looks
like strawberry soda.

3-8-08

Toni Atchison

Moonlight

Moonlight sets me wandering
to places I have dreamed.
With emerald skies
and ruby grass,
and everything between.
Moonlight sets me dancing
under crystal velvet stars,
to symphonies of wind and rain
and sunsets in your eyes.
Alas the moonlight never lasts
and day comes far too soon.
But wander again I'll go tonight
guided by the moon.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison

Moonlight On The Snow

I leave lit candles unsupervised on the table,
with only the cats in attendance.

I leave the car to run in defense of the cold.

I stand in the drive and watch the full moon
as it shines down on the first snowfall.

Branches dressed by day with ice
become sculpted of silver and jewels
by the light of the moon.

Tiny footprints of animals become
ebony stitches across glittering fabric
by the light of the moon.

12-4-06

Toni Atchison

My House At Night

Darkness has come again,
and I love it so at the end of the year.
Long cool nights of warm blankets,
favorite old books,
cats like heat-seeking missiles,
fighting for the warm spot.
At night, I hear the house-
the furnace chuckles and mutters in the basement,
that loose window ratteling in the breeze.
This house speaks to me at night,
telling me tales of good and bad times past,
of other souls who've passed on through.
It remembers meals cooked,
arguments fought,
love made.
And it tells me these tales
in whispers and creaks,
in squeaky hinges,
in sighs and groans.

11-30-06

Toni Atchison

My Love Whispers In The Dark

(written with Gust Dimoulas)

Speak to me in words of love,
your voice soft in my ear.
We walk the paths of night together,
hand in hand til dawn.
You say the universe is rewarding you,
you've never known a love like mine.
I say you have me, heart and soul,
until the end of time.
So speak to me softly
in our language of love,
words whispered in the dark.
To feel your body lying
next to mine,
our heat combined,
the scent of our skin blends
into a perfect perfume of love.

April 17,2008

Toni Atchison

Nascar Sunday

Round and round and around they go,
fourty-three men in a long double row.
They teach us of passion, of teamwork and hate,
and so every weekend I make a date,
with fourty-three men in a long double row,
as round and round and around they go.

2005

Toni Atchison

Night Time

Night time is our time,
when you always seem so near.
Even with miles between us -
I smell your skin,
 feel your hands,
 hear your words.
We can hide in the dark,
away from the world.
Even when you're not with me -
I can taste your mouth,
 touch your mind,
 love you always.

4/10/08

Toni Atchison

On Writing Poetry For My Love

I craft my words of love
to be pleasing to your ear-
to delight your eye,
to touch your heart,
to bind you softly to me.
Has there ever been a love like this?
Epic and plain,
calm and strange,
one in a million-
one of a billion.
I think of you in candles and flowers,
I think of you in my bed-
I think of you constantly.

5-4-08

Toni Atchison

Once More, Nosa

Nosa, beloved friend,
how I wish there were
fewer miles between us.
And you, the strong one,
what could I do to comfort you?
Ah, it's hard right now,
sharing my joy in
the midst of your pain.
It almost seems unfair
for me to be happy
while you are so sad.
You always know that,
good or bad,
happy or sad,
you have my love-
and remain in my thoughts,
fondly.

11-27-07

Toni Atchison

One Day In Early Fall

Fall came to town one day
with a subtlety I almost missed.
But a yellow leaf sailed gaily by
on a breeze a bit more than chill.
And how long now until
Madam Web-Weaver searches carefully
for a space to make her winter home?
Already I've seen the woolly-worms
in black or brown or gold.
Soon the geese will fall into formation,
and shout farewells from a cornflower sky.

9/18/06

Toni Atchison

Pain

Do I make you happy
I foolishly ask,
and you always say I do.
But I wonder then,
why you act like
you don't care,
or your too busy.
Maybe I'm not important,
reduced to the status of furniture.
But I hurt, and I need you,
too afraid of losing you
to wander somewhere else.
Inside I ask,
how long can I take this?
How long until I've had enough,
and break yor spell,
to find my way
back into the world?

2/18/08

Toni Atchison

Phoenix

How I'd love to lay you down
and take you deep inside.
To take you to my magic place,
ensnare you in my spell.
To stoke your passions like
a flame burning from within,
to cool your fire with my skin
and set you free to fly.

3-27-08

Toni Atchison

Pictures

I'll keep no picture of you in my wallet,
or in any picture-frame, gilded and carved
like a carnival prize,
holding you still and same.
I carry your face upon my heart,
and the sound of your voice in my ear.
Could a picture ever capture
the gleam in your eyes,
the curve of your smile,
the turn of your head?
I'll keep no picture of you in my wallet,
to be viewed whenever I miss you.
For I miss you every moment of every day,
every moment we're apart.

4/15/08

Toni Atchison

Powerless Night

How nice and bright our house is
while others sit darkly brooding,
without the magic that makes them
warm and bright.
Lucky me,
I am surrounded by candles
in shades of white or red,
of peach or blue or green.
The room is an infused quilt
of warm scented patches
in colors of vanilla, apples and peaches-
and one that claims the smell of oceans.
And the trickster wind strains itself through the screen
to bring me the scents of rain and earth
and green growing things
to mingle with the wax,
and the scent-sound of
my neighbors' generator
as he curses his garage door closed.
I try to read by candlelight but,
distracted by a devious wind,
watch lovely scenes of ebony and ivory across the walls-
harsh and still by lamplight-
have grown soft and sweetly glowing by candle.
My cats watch the slow waltz of shadowplay,
so usually absent,
suffused tonight with frantic lives,
breathed full by wind and flame.
I share a snack of crackers and cheese
with my extrovert cat,
hearing the sounds that hide so well
behind the veils of the civilized world.
And then someone quotes the Bible
and throws a switch,
and the miracle re-occurs.
I take care of the clean-up chores
of blowing out candles and
re-programming the electronic wardens
that rule our lives

(and insist on speaking French to me,
in spite of my English limitations) ,
and I wonder, briefly though,
if my neighbors spent their night
half as happily as I did?

2005

Toni Atchison

Rain

I lay in the dark and listen
to the sound of rain on the glass.
Comforted by the gentle pattern,
swaddled in my blanket.
Lulled by the rain,
counterpointed by the
big purr of a small orange cat,
cradled by pillows and
a soft warm bed, rain lulls me to sleep.

4-10-08

Toni Atchison

Road Trip

We rode the silver highway,
Mike and me,
chasing after midnight and the moon,
singing along with Jerry and the boys.
We smelled like brown paint, chicken and rice,
and ignored the memories sitting silently in the back seat.
I'm going home to my girl and my cats,
he'll return to an empty house.
Almost strangers on Friday night,
brother and sister by Sunday.
I laughed so hard when that cop pulled us over -
Mike was sweating bullets.
Naughty boy was holding,
and scared the cop would find out.
When it was over,
I laughed even harder.
He tried to be mad,
but ended laughing all the way home.
I was glad to be on the road again,
that leads like a silver ribbon
to my own warm bed.
I know I'll wander again,
but I always find my way home.

12-8-08

Toni Atchison

Snowfall

Driving into a winter's night
I watch as billions of snowflakes
dance in the yellow streetlight,
keeping time with U2
on the radio.

And Bono sings of being
blown by the wind,
as I watch millions of snowflakes
scurry and circle in a dance
who's every move is called
by the whim of the nightwind.

To my delight I see
thousands of snowflakes of all designs.
Little dragonflies that swoop and land
on warm windows,
to disappear into beads of water
that glisten like jewels on the glass.

And flocks of hundreds
of icy butterflies
dodge car headlights,
sailing like daredevils
over on-coming cars,
finally coming to rest
on the cold slumbering ground.

Dec.6/7,2006

Toni Atchison

So Much For The First Day Of Summer

So much for the first day of summer.
Hot as hell till the storms rolled in,
and I found myself wondering,
just for a bit,
if this would be one of those
trip-to-the-basement nights.

And so much for the first day of summer,
I've seen 46 of them now.
And I try to act jaded, so nonchalant,
but secretly I'm pleased.

Deep down inside me, I am the heathen child,
dancing with abandon in the green forest,
splashing gleefully through sacred streams,
singing loudly- and off-key - from the hilltops.

Yeah, so much for the first day of summer,
cause every one of them is different
and every one of them is precious.

2007

Toni Atchison

Soul Kiss

I love what you do to me
when you speak my name.
Every sound from your lips
is a carress to my soul.
I can almost feel your lips on mine,
can almost taste your mouth.
I dream of your mouth
speaking words of love
in that voice that shivers me so-
much like your kiss!

4-17-08

Toni Atchison

Spirit Path

I walk the path that many deny
And open my eyes to unseen wonders.
The soft sheen of a spirit
soul-light encaptures,
enraptures me as always.
Unseen doorways reek,
redolant with buried memories
and ties to family now beyond the veil.

2006

Toni Atchison

Spring Moon

The moon rides low in the sky tonight,
a friend of mine from old.
She walks with me always,
a favorite traveller,
companion of dreamless nights.
I love her so, a beauty rare.
Bold-faced and shining
or timid and shy,
it never matters
long as she's there.
I love her in summer,
when storm-clouds veil her.
And laughing she peeks and hides again.
I love her in autumn,
when her face turns cold to the earth,
distantly walking stellar highways.
I love her deeply in winter,
in icy rings of midnight splendor,
sparkling blue-white the snow.
But i love her most strongly in spring,
when she guilds my world in silver,
and lines the earth in quicksilver dew,
or silve-laced frost of delicate fronds.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison

Story Teller

Tell me tales
of women and wizards,
of heroes and weavers.
Take me to that place
where you leave me behind -
part of the mundane world -
where you go to meet your destiny
by side-stepping reality.
Let me fall in love with your worlds -
tell me your story.

4/27/08

Toni Atchison

The Last Apology

I'm spending too much time
alone in my room,
eating cookie-dough fudge,
texting my friends.
(I miss you)

I've cried a river
in the last two weeks.
Wanting you badly,
not believing you're gone.
(I need you)

I think about you
all the time,
awake or asleep
I cry for you.
(I'm sorry)

6-24-08

Toni Atchison

The Poet's Lament (Part Two)

I look back on pages I've written,
on words laid down by my hand,
and often have to think how very
full of crap I am.
Oh, I aspire- I dream,
(Lord, don't I just!)
but I never seem to get around to
pinning down just what I mean.
I let the words get in the way.
But how can I take myself seriously
while blowing raspberries or
shaking my ass at the world?
So I write around the issues-
with accompanying scribbles
and misspelled words-
and laugh inside as I
make yet another attempt.
Someday, I may get it right.

6/12/06

Toni Atchison

The Quality Of Light (Half-Past February)

the quality of light seems
to be of great interest to me.
Within it I see change
of weather and season.
And February's only half-past,
but I see Spring
in the setting sun's rays.
Even if the days weren't getting longer
or the air didn't smell different,
the quality of light
would show the way.

Winter light is flat and pale,
thin as watered milk,
delicate as a spiderweb.

Summer light is full and bold,
brazen at the far end.

Autumn light is red and fading,
full of whispers of seasons past
and promises of what's to come.

But Spring is filled with new-wrought gold-
soft and pale on Winter's end,
built on the banked embers
of Autumn's red-gold fires,
and with Summer's unborn heat
to breathe life inside her,
Spring peeks shyly into the garden,
then boldly steps in with arms thrown wide.

2/18/07

Toni Atchison

The Quality Of Light (Springtime)

In this new house in the spring,
I must learn the light anew.
Fresh lessons of dappled bright and shadow,
a quiet street,
an easterly view.
Even on a cloudy day,
these rooms are full of light-
calm, at peace, and sweetly golden.
And as days grow longer,
building toward heat,
my fascination with the quality of light
changes daily, growing evermore.
Trees so bare when we moved in
have fat buds now, ready to explode.
And the loveliness of light in the spring
makes me love this even more.

4-22-08

Toni Atchison

The Storm-Veiled Moon

Three nights now I watch the full moon
wade through shoals of storm clouds.
Presented in shades of slate,
they slip across an azure sky.
And the aging moon parts the clouds
as easily as silken scarves,
sewing baroque seams
with quicksilver thread.
She dresses tree and grass
in diamonds and silver.
Locust and frog call for an encore
as lightening vies for attention
with a showy flash.
And the Lady Moon sails on serene,
first veiled as darkly as a Muslim beauty,
then through the virtuous bridal veil,
then bare-faced and shameless,
Queen of the Night Sky
until the clouds slip in again,
and the game begins anew.

2006

Toni Atchison

The Toad Ode

(for April)

this was a joking comment on writing poetry when short on sleep (I suffer from insomnia) . I wrote it for my daughter, who dared me to put this on here. Forgive me.....

Sometimes poetry is like giving birth,
it drives you damned crazy
when the whole process hurts.
the phone tends to ring
as you wrestle with rhyme,
or you can't find a pen
or just don't have the time.
The words dance around
like kids full of sugar-
my mind vapor-locks, and
rhymes sugar with booger.
But it's three in the morning-
my mind's gotten strange
as into absurd
it quickly does range.
Oh, why did I write this poem tonight?
It's not very good-
it's just not right.
No sonnets were crafted,
no passionate odes-
and I'm stuck once again,
and thinking of toads.
 (There's a toad on the road,
 the semi caused him to ex-plode
 and that is the end of the ode
 to the toad, in the road)

2005□

Toni Atchison

Thunderstorm

Summer-

and the beloved unwelcome damp heat
that lets me watch in awe
giants in studies of gray,
mutter and mumble across the cornflower sky.
A view framed in clothesline and maple leaves.
Cats in the windows drinking the freshening breeze
with less subtlety than milk.
Cold rain smell on hot asphalt-
tearful confessions of sky to earth.
Scent of river, earth and corn
flung in past the curtains by a fretful wind.
Hopping creatures under the hostas
coaxing the rain down in hoarse calls.
Chimes singing joyous in the breeze
as trees whisper in counterpoint.
A surge of pure light opens the sky,
and rain comes down with a shout.

2004

Toni Atchison

To My Grown-Up Daughter

I wish you hadn't grown up just yet.
Things were so much easier
when I could fight your dragons for you,
and you thought I was the smartest mom
in the whole wide world.
Back then, I could kiss away the hurt,
create the Tickle Monster to chase the blues,
and I understood your homework.
But you're a woman now,
grown up with a job of your own.
All I can do now is offer advice-
and hope you don't roll your eyes,
or give me that look.
You don't think I'm the smartest mom
in the whole wide world anymore.
Damn, I wish you hadn't grown up yet.

11-30-06

Toni Atchison

To My Mother

I won't apologise for the
way I've chosen to live.
It frustrates me, sometimes,
that I can't meet your expectations.
But I chose my path long ago,
and have no desire to change it now.
So don't fear for my future
or fret for my past.
I've made mistakes,
and learned from them.
Just love me,
the best way you can
and know that I fought my demons ages ago,
and against all the odds,
I won.

6/11/06

Toni Atchison

Tongue In Cheek

(an exercise in sarcasm, for Mike Sutton)

maybe the world would be a better place
if we rocket our leaders out into space.
and let them ET's know, we don't need no probes!
just plenty of fun and bigger bath robes.
maybe we could save the world if we kicked the leaders' out.
with no one to lead, no one will follow.
isn't that what it's all about?
i'm tired of wars, and killing and such.
in the name of God, it's really too much!
so let's dump the leaders and start over again.
we don't really like them, so why pretend?
i'm so sick and tired of how they screw up.
if you offered me a dozen, they aren't worth a....
cup!

5-4-08

Toni Atchison

Unbroken

Here I stand in front of you-
like a wild shy creature,
afraid, yet-

wanting to know.

Your hands will hurt me,
destroy me,
tear me down
into nothingness-

and rebuild me,
making me whole.

Yet you know I am fragile,
delicate as a soap bubble
adrift in the winds.

Tender as a new leaf,
bent hard by storm winds
and yet.....
unbroken.

7-21-08

Toni Atchison

Waiting For Winter

Thanksgiving day had come and gone,
it was sixty degrees that day....
and has warmed up since.
My cats are confused,
sitting at the screen door
like they did all summer.
But the sun doesn't set at four thirty in July.
And even though I wore shorts today,
an Arctic monster climbs the mountains
and gathers itself to run,
headlong and screaming,
all the way to the Mississippi.....
they predict a foot of snow.

11-30-06

Toni Atchison

Wandering

There's a house that waits for me
down at the end of the street,
where my lover waits with open arms
to cure my wandering feet.
The man who waits in this little house,
whose eyes I've come to love
knows that I must see it all,
from earth below to heaven above.
So down in this house
at the end of the street,
my true love waits for me.
Who kisses my lips
and warms my soul,
and sweeps me off my wandering feet.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison

When I Laugh

When I laugh I feel
like I can conquer the world.
It's as if magic happens inside me
and I must let it out.
When I laugh I forget all
the slights and slams.
When I laugh I love
all the side-effects
of a good belly laugh.

2006

Toni Atchison

Wild Things

Let's play like wild things
under the night,
where only we know who we are.
Where bits and pieces
of our civilized selves
crack and fall away in the dark.
Animals we are.
And becoming leads us to such joy-
of a dark, sweaty kind.
Where claws are barely sheathed,
and teeth nip at fragile skin.....
the blood loss is minimal,
but oh, so sensual.

7-23-08

Toni Atchison

Winter Moon

Oh, what far-westering moon
into the early morning winter sky
does crowd that sapphire plane
in abundant silver light?

What dreams of fragrant flowers
or wishes of love, are cast upon
sleepers bathed in beams of magic light?

What memories of a primitive place,
or tall-masted ships, come a-trickle down
like precious jewels on the slumberer?

And have I never danced in the arms of a lover,
that the full-lipped moon should touch me so?
Or is there enough primitive beast inside me,
brought to life by the eternal silvery glow?

I long for the arrival of the near-distant spring,
when this same full moon calls me to fly,
or to run through the forest with the pack,
or to lie simply in the dew-jeweled grass and remember
the far-westering moon, awash in a winter sky,
accompanying me of a sleepless night.

2006

Toni Atchison

You Make Me Feel Young Again

(for Gust)

You make me feel young again-
like my heart is whole and strong,
and the world is a toy to delight me.
And laughter flows like water,
with sunlight as a generous gift.

You make me feel young again-
like making love was invented by us
as we walk perfected in a garden,
an Eden of modern life,
with rain to cloak us sweetly.

You make me feel young again-
like all my aches have fled,
and the universe lies at my fingertips
with the earth as a gumdropp of sweetness.
Your love will forever sustain me-
and you make me feel young again.

3-30-08

Toni Atchison