

On Love and Writing:
Sometimes the Pencil Splinters

A: *Upset.* The day that you left, I cried. All day I cried. In front of my dad, I cried. I knew, I knew that you were gone and we'd be- *In a calm and graceful manner.* Long distance, it doesn't work for us. We can't communicate when we're apart. We can't, we don't-

B: *In a calm and stoic manner.* Maybe you're right. Maybe this doesn't work when we're apart. Maybe I should have done more.

Silence.

B: What do you want to do?

*This level reach of blue is not my sea;
Here are sweet waters, pretty in the sun,
Whose quiet ripples meet obediently
A marked and measured line, one after one.
This is no sea of mine. That humbly laves
Untroubled sands, spread glittering and warm.
I have a need of wilder, crueler waves;
They sicken of the calm, who knew the storm.¹*

I was the same.²

*So let a love beat over me again,
Loosing its million desperate breakers wide;
Sudden and terrible to rise and wane;
Roaring the heavens apart; a reckless tide
That casts upon the heart, as it recedes,
Splinters and spars and dripping, salty weeds.³*

B: It's always you. You are the one always making problems.

B: I think that a soul mate is someone who does something for you that no one else can.

A: I think that a soul mate is someone who understands you completely, who can feel you when you're apart, who could find you in hell.

A: I don't think we're soul mates.

A: I can never do anything right.

A: I don't think this is working.

¹ *Fair Weather*, Dorothy Parker

² *Killing the Spring*, Anne Sexton

³ *Fair Weather*, Dorothy Parker

A: You're not listening to me.

B: You have no idea what love is.

B: It's always you. You are the one always making problems.

*There sat down, a thing on Henry's heart
so heavy, if he had a hundred years
& more, & weeping, sleepless, in all them time
Henry could not make good.*⁴

B: Many people thought that Henry was John Berryman.

B: Many people thought that Nick was Ernest Hemingway.

*"All of a sudden everything was over," Nick said. "I don't know why it was. I couldn't help it.
Just like the three-day blow come now and rip all the leaves off the trees."*

*"It was my fault," Nick said.*⁵

A: Many people thought that Anne Sexton was crazy.

I could not see the spring.

I could not hear the spring.

I could not touch the spring.

*Once upon a time a young person
died for no reason.*

*I was the same.*⁶

*When a cold rain kept on and killed the spring, it was as though a young person had died
for no reason.*⁷

*They sicken of the calm, who knew the storm.*⁸

Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so.

After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,

we ourselves flash and yearn,

and moreover my mother told me as a boy

(repeatedly) 'Ever to confess you're bored

means you have no

Inner Resources.' I conclude now I have no

*inner resources, because I am heavy bored.*⁹

She went to the museum because she was bored. The Hemingway photo was placed at the entrance of the Yousuf Karsh exhibit. And it was her favorite portrait there. She admired him in

⁴ *Dream Song 29*, John Berryman

⁵ *Three Day Blow*, Ernest Hemingway

⁶ *Killing the Spring*, Anne Sexton

⁷ *A Moveable Feast*, Ernest Hemingway

⁸ *Fair Weather*, Dorothy Parker

⁹ *Dream Song 14*, John Berryman

many ways, his writing and reputation. He seemed someone that she could love. He seemed challenging. And the mystery of the photo intrigued her.

In the photo, she found him to be upset, his forehead wrinkled and eyes a distance, as if he didn't understand something. His expression was as if a question of his could not be answered, and he was desperate for it. His shirt bulged up as if he had hands on hips. He demanded something in that photo. He demanded the truth probably, is what she thought. But there was a sadness behind, deep in his eyes and forehead that showed the truth.

The photo was a profound moment for her. She treasured so deeply his work, and the portrait exemplified all the anguish in his writing.

She took a step back from the photo. She could see her reflection; the outline of her hair surrounded his face. She touched the photo so hard that she left her prints visible on the glass, right over the eyes.

*My eyes, those sluts, those whores,
would play no more.*¹⁰

A: I need to be able to see you. I need to be able to touch you. I need to be able to read you. I can't read you over the phone. I can't communicate with so much space between us. I can't talk to you over A PHONE, all the fuzzy airwaves. *Voice echoes, trails into oblivion.* I can't. I can't. I can't. I can't.

*"She's blowing," Nick said.*¹¹

B: What do you want to do?

*I was the same.*¹²

¹⁰ *Killing the Spring*, Anne Sexton

¹¹ *Three Day Blow*, Ernest Hemingway

¹² *Killing the Spring*, Anne Sexton