

Poetry Series

Kevin Straw

- poems -

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"i met a dead corpse of the plague..." - Samuel Pepys 1665

i met a dead corpse of the plague
inhuman shape of what once was
and saw accusing eyes which asked
why had he been humiliated thus?

why had he not been sought by death
upon God's battlefield of honour
his life made worthy in the cause
of loving God and neighbour?

why had God let a flea from rats
destroy his image in him thus,
as he had bloodied and bewildered him
his son, who died upon a cross?

Kevin Straw

a bird sings in its ancient willow

a bird sings in its ancient willow
a tune of fleeting loves and fears
which has no past and no tomorrow,
or note of once and future tears

a street lamp drives away the darkness
and keeps you all night in my sight
yet even as i touch your softness
i feel love dying in the light

and i am only sure i kiss you
and smell your perfume on the air
- and hide in that, a hut against the future,
the only guarantee i'm here, you there

Kevin Straw

a time ago time made a space...

a time ago time made a space
for you and me to love
in this large life a little place
of nothing but love's touch

within our piece of paradise
the world swirled round us raging
but we lived in each other's eyes
unmoving and un-ageing

and then, and why i can't recall,
we sickened of this heaven
from paradise a dreadful fall
that still is not forgiven

time gifted us a perfect love
but we threw it away
- why is perfection not enough
we must have things decay?

Kevin Straw

all love deforms the base of time

all love deforms the base of time
distorts the realm of argument
cracks law's egg with the hammer crime
and says what really is not meant

it is the this of feeling/thought
that is not here, there or the other
that can't by cash or thought be bought
makes friend or enemy of foe or brother

love is the pregnant wife of needs
that bears the saviour of the fall
ends on a cross or bears and breeds
no matter which, it saves us all

Kevin Straw

all our warm unmeasured past...

all our warm unmeasured past
is now a chilly cell for us
and here we sit and waste
our time in arid calculus

the give and take of careless love
is beads strung on an abacus
and we who fed on sight and touch
now fight for bones long dead to us

our souls can neither sit nor stand
for we have got too small for us
we wait for life or death to give a hand
and free us from the sight of us

Kevin Straw

all the stones that make our world

all the stones that make our world
are heavy on the guiltless land
as though our pent-up rage has hurled
its execution with a careful hand
and now the wounded earth is curled
beneath more stones than it can stand

Kevin Straw

all worlds all planets and all stars...

all worlds all planets and all stars
all galaxies that widely scatter
are part of plastic time and space
as though the universe were crystal matter

you ask: "what would have happened if
this speck of me had not begun? "
i say that nothing here would now exist
all that occurs was, is, and will be one

i'm not the cause of things, nor they of me
no atom came before the next one
the wave of was, is, and to be
has no immortal disconnection

the i that seems an absolute me
that dreams of things apart
is part now, tomorrow, history
and has no end, no start

you ask: "then can we try
to purify the earth and sky? "
i say there is no guarantee we can
a man-made world is a world-made man.

perhaps it's time to put our minds to sleep
seed only love, leave well alone, then reap

Kevin Straw

as i was fool in life

as i was fool in life
so i am wise in death
learn not from my words
but from my final breath

whatever's done is over
can't be mended
parents, children, lover
it is all ended

let it go
the dead smile 'it is so'
that it is ended
and can't be mended

Kevin Straw

be off ham-fisted poetry!

be off ham-fisted poetry!
you cannot know my love and me
the best you have is the red rose
no better than a mundane prose

words cannot say what goes
when nerves excite the blindworm flesh
the genital electric throes
the stertorous sex-loaded breath

and yet and yet you can abstract
some meaning from this concrete act
or else what good is this to me
this thing that's here called poetry?

Kevin Straw

bedecked with stars and pendant moon

bedecked with stars and pendant moon,
with perfume from the heavy-headed flowers
night blessed us last night with her boon
and veiled the world with her dark hours

she taught us how to kiss and touch
without self-consciousness or shame
how love is not too little or too much
how love has but the one sweet name

love is most seeing when the eyes are blind
when only tenderness can guide the hand
when passion's the sole compass that can find
the dark way to love's promised land

Kevin Straw

before my angel dies

before my angel dies
paled on the thorns of this sharp life
i hope to hear somewhere somehow
the nascent music of the endless now

when hymns shall rise above my wan deaf corpse
and tearful eyes look back at me
i hope i shall have lived a while
the deep mood music of sensuality

i have been plagued by medicines
that faithfully would heal me of my life
and been subjected to macabre hands
that would take out my heart by virtue's knife

but always despite virtuality
and love beyond the love of life
i have heard deeper than the blood in me
the desiderata of mortality

Kevin Straw

before my heart deserts its paradise

before my heart deserts its paradise
of feeling that you love me
at least please cover up your lies
and once again with untruth touch me

let me in this dark night
feel that the absolute is here
that any seeking for the light
is only anxiousness and fear

i will take morning after all
if night is proved to be worthwhile
and care not if i shall recall
your smile was not your smile

Kevin Straw

before this hand of yours

before this hand of yours
here warm upon my breast
i looked for jagged hours
for such a complete rest

i braved such ragged winds
when here was gentle breath
and travelled far to find
far from this curative caress

love is the clinic of the soul
its healing touch and heat
that can alone remake us whole
that we may dare the street

Kevin Straw

belle dame

i held the hand of the lady next to me
and prepared to be a dead man
i knew she'd be the death of me
however long love would live on

she stared at something out of sight
her hair curled black around my wrist
her body's statue in the light
would never move except she wished

oh pale-skinned woman like a ghost
whose look can make my heart stop still!
why should i love you, of all, the most
when all i give to you, you kill?

you sucked the will quite out of me
i am your doll, and you my fantasy!

Kevin Straw

between head and heart

i don't want love that's
one false move you're dead
though i'll take bed and bawd
to bored in bed

there is an area
between the head and heart
that's love's sweet/sour but
lasting part

Kevin Straw

by the river, long into the night...

by the river, long into the night
we watched the moon rise yellow bright
i saw its glints slide down your hair
into your eyes and move me there

it turned into such shocking lust
it made the moon itself seem dust
and as the river rolled by black and white
we made the world turn out its light

and black and shameless made the sun
stay till we were ready it should come
and envy us two by the riverside
children of the moon still deep inside

Kevin Straw

caged in my uncomfortable age

caged in my uncomfortable age
where i may not sit or stand
i remember especially
the feel of your white hand

the thing that like a running deer
made me want to seize and fear
the thing that fingered deep in me
and set my secret love quite free

and now walled round by age
which makes a slave of me
i think with love and proper rage
of your sweet hand that rescued me

Kevin Straw

call out the dredger for my heart

call out the dredger for my heart
beneath a silt of sex and love
someone has murdered, cut out this part
and it is buried deep in mud

where is that youthful life i had
that lovely innocence of love
someone has killed it, someone mad
and staged this tragedy of love

someone has left my bloody corpse
still walking through the street
pretending it can think and feel
but faking sentiment and heat

someone has walked through public ways
my dripping heart within her hand
and thrown it in a deep wide stream
to sink into the depthless sand

Kevin Straw

candle

imagine wax and string and name
all converted to a flame
- that wasn't like my love for you
it was it, absolute and true!

all me, all mine, all time and space
hung burning in that dark embrace
and for your love i burnt my heart
as sacrifice of every part

and now these empty cinders walk
and think and feel and even talk
but you could blow them with a kiss
to rouse the flame i badly miss

and yet a second flame I fear
would give but dark smoke, blinding tears

Kevin Straw

carve nothing on my stone

carve nothing on my stone
but strike a tree and see
the birds take to the air

leave my nothing all alone
and write upon the breeze
your freedom there

Kevin Straw

city

our love, a city with no beating heart,
was solid, clean and very pretty
but lacked that filthy dirty part

that lurks in alleyways and underground
is dangerous and often shitty
but generous too and pleasure bound

and having such a super structure
forgot to add the electric blood
that lights and warms and drives the city
that makes it human, and completely good

Kevin Straw

concrete shade

i still can follow from your fingers
your body to your pretty feet
though all i have's your shade that lingers
from a year ago's delightful heat?

where in me is your silky skin
your long hands and your pink-nailed toes
the parts that architecturally go out and in
and the shapely chimney of your nose?

i was a waste ground on which love built
a temple of you to worship in
and you away then all my guilt
has turned into a touching sin

and how can i some other lover find
when you so adamantly occupy my mind?

Kevin Straw

could you lie down till you are dead?

could you lie down till you are dead
blind to the sun's warmth overhead
indifferent to the scent of flowers
deaf to the calling of the hours?

and could you stay despite your lust
for food and love till you are dust?
could you resist the birds that bring
their fledglings up in bright warm spring?

oh life is yours a touch away
the easiest thing you'll do or say
- rest in its arms your wearied head
and let life tell you when you are dead

Kevin Straw

crazy death

how crazy to think life's arrow once shot
from the start of the world to this moment right here
as in a stopped film could suddenly stop
in the wink of an eye no longer appear?

how can this hard world dissolve on my going
and the sun and the rain work for all men but me?
and the fruit and the flowers that seem ever-growing
grow forever for others to touch, smell and see?

how can love cease on one random heartbeat
with the thought i thought would last evermore
and vanish with all the bone, flesh and blood-heat
i thought safe in the walls of time's concrete store?

i laugh at the thought of my ever dying
so real and unbreakable life seems to be
i understand those i see frightened or crying
but cannot believe it will happen to me

Kevin Straw

crazy-quilt

i launched myself upon life's wave
found god and found he did not save

then changed impossible belief
in man to cynical relief

i loved a little, hated too,
and failed to separate the two

i did some good, a little bad
- no just reward for either had

the houses built were never home
my heart could never settle down

i went straight down a crooked lane
but who's to whip when none to blame?

yet for this formless crazy-quilt
i feel no sadness and no guilt

this difficult-to-understand that's me
is like the wayward yet determined sea

Kevin Straw

creatures on my bed this morning

creatures on my bed this morning
animals in human sheets
i am in my love's cage mourning
those midnight to the small hours' sweets

why is the light so ruthless now
which, as the moon, transfigured us
why does it make us want to know
how pointless was night's fuss?

small thing of love's lost dream
residual silence of our savage groans
how is it i want to scream
that everything is nothing now

and yet as my hand makes you move
i resurrect the angel of my love

Kevin Straw

cunning love

there is a time when bricks not flesh
become the building blocks of heart
when line and angle, measured breath,
replace the tender because bloody part

then those for whom the feelings are
a castle that divides in two
cannot complain if none will care
if pitilessly false or true

they try to rule from strength not love
their eyes are calculating tools
but being hard is not enough
for cunning love's the strength of fools

Kevin Straw

damaged daffodils

damaged daffodils
caught in moonlight
beheaded and broke on
a footpath at night

in spite of their plight
the bloom and the stem
have life, not a token,
while the sap is in them

i learn from their dying
in their own good time
that a life lived broken
can outlive the crime

Kevin Straw

decline of love

from formal days grew formal nights
until we almost had to write
an invitation stating time and place
and what to wear for our embrace

now we send embassies of looks
recite our passions from rule books
and where there was a rough and ready law
we measure steps upon a hard dance floor

Kevin Straw

don't say your tears are all the oceans

don't say your tears are all the oceans
your griefs all clouds that grey the skies
that love is gone from your emotions
replaced by all lamenting cries

this death that you are going through
is not the one that takes your soul
but something bad that blesses you
a part of all that makes you whole

Kevin Straw

freedom

i met a man who said to me
'move well away i must be free'

i moved away but then i saw
that i stood where i stood before

then i told him to leave me be
he went away... to stand by me!

we were not free until we found
the free still share a common ground

Kevin Straw

fuse smile with cry

fuse smile with cry
to make the stuff of life
- experience is the sigh
of being pleased with a knife

heaven still knows hell
is close and can't forget it
but so does hell know very well
that heaven is beside it

love seems awhile to be
the answer, the pure light,
but, even blindly happy, we
can see its end in sight

there is no sensual or mental fix
no gold no paradise of soul
that will divide this glad/sad mix
for either gone, we are not whole

Kevin Straw

grace

our years seem darkened to a church for you
in which your face alone shines through
the air is thick with the remembered scent of you
I touch for blessing my stone memory of you

your lips are burning still above my prayer for you
your eyes show heaven through their stain of blue
I had not thought I would remember you
in a cathedral of my love for you

my spirit kneels, I close my eyes to you
at last at peace and solaced for my loss of you

Kevin Straw

graph of delight

a soprano voice like a graph of delight
moves towards heaven on a warm summer's night
but something still holds it from getting to heaven
no matter the passion with which it was written

i see cars winding through street-watching light
and star chips spoiling the sky's window pane
the houses are beasts fast asleep on the street
round the resident mortals forgetting their pain

why is this wax flesh unlike its flame life
love unlike sex, and the mind unlike reason?
we are two parts which are never at strife
but feed off each other in a dumb kind of treason

Kevin Straw

had i but once caressed your hair

had i but once caressed your hair
or kissed you for a second
it would have been worth being here
a thing in history to be reckoned

but for a year i held you close
from Summer till next Spring
can it be wondered that i cannot lose
the memory of such a thing!

Kevin Straw

here is one small forked man

here is one small forked man
his head full of the universe
who dreams in colour that he can
say the invisible in verse

his tiny fingers tap the keyboard
inside his tiny little room
and from his tiny word-hoard
he tiny-ly taps out his doom

love set his tiny gears in motion
and drove him from himself to find
the words for some great notion
too big to fit his tiny mind

and as the sun sets in the vastness
a giant in his tiny eyes
he thinks he can keep off the darkness
with tiny tiny tiny lies

Kevin Straw

here is this finger, here in the night

here is this finger, here in the night
this small nerve ending and beginning me
by this i know all/every light
as each salt molecule knows sea

and when this finger touches you
descending like a point of light
i know the all of me and you
i know my way round in the night

by this all seasons and all years are made
all lives and deaths, all mortal hours
the universe itself is done and said
each petal at the start/end of all flowers

what is there more than touching you
but death?

Kevin Straw

holy is this evening made...

holy is this evening made
by your body on my bed
your beauty makes a little shade
of heaven in my heart and head

i sit upon a chair an hour
and watch you faithfully with love
and feel my soul held by a power
that would be broken should i touch

i've nothing now but love in sight
where none takes or is ever taken
my heart and eye live in your light
my body's still, in case i waken

Kevin Straw

how can a life be ruined by love

how can a life be ruined by love
how can a summer spent with you
be the last time i ever touch
the only thing i think is true?

one night i held you close to me
on a moonlit path within a wood
when nature best loved you and me
and love was nature's good

i feel you now soft in your dress
and hear it slipping to the ground
and still that thunderbolt tendresse
is deep in me and all around

i watch the full moon in the sky
held up by magic like a stone
changed from heart's truth to heady lie
whose worship leaves the worshipper alone

why did you stop my heart's clock then
which, stopped, has since been full of pain?

Kevin Straw

how can i get outside this maze of you

how can i get outside this maze of you
where every twist and turn is you?
i know i entered to be loved by you
to know and relish every part of you

and part of what i paid to enter you
was to amaze myself with you
but find you are a mystery that you
have hidden even from the sight of you

i turn and turn and still find you
an all-encompassed love for you
but when i think i've found the map of you
you change and i stay deep in you

Kevin Straw

how can there be such tears in love

how can there be such tears in love
which cannot wash it all away?
what is there in this kiss and touch
that dies to live another day?

for many days now you and i
so mixed in love and strife
have found the battle truth and lie
and hate gives this love life

i see the shadows on the wall
like men in armour fight
and as our bodies rise and fall
so darkness is confused in light

without your love i cannot live
despite the grief our touches give

Kevin Straw

how dark it was that little room

how dark it was that little room
where we spent summer in its tomb
hid from the city's noise above
where we forever made cool love

like animals by sleeping hibernate
we made by love the harsh sun wait
and blind beneath the staring world
we blind in love stayed blindly curled

and there was only touch and smell
and you were my, i yours, all's well
till all the human world was gone
and two in one were all and everyone

Kevin Straw

how is it i still feel your skin

how is it i still feel your skin
these forty years beyond our pain?
see your body dusk-with-light
feel how your lips kissed me again?

watch now your hair curl down your back
a black/bright river in evening snow?
can almost touch the warmth i lack
this evening staring at the slow sun go?

why is it 'then' is more than 'now'
why all the years of nothingness?
why was life real just in that time
the only real time had of tenderness?

my breath comes quicker as i feel
in memory your presence warm and soft
the world that holds me on it now
has not since then been real enough

my span of life was when we loved
since then i have not died or lived

Kevin Straw

how is it love was simply light

how is it love was simply light
the angled sun shot in my eye
which like a camera blinked and shut
and, like a camera, could not lie?

so many million miles it flew
and cast its rays upon your face
and then almost before we knew
this light had forced us to embrace!

but i was hoodwinked by the light
so quick it took away my sight

Kevin Straw

how many tearful days are nights to me

how many tearful days are nights to me
now i am dead/alive beneath your spell!
how every absence frightens me
and every presence brings me hell!

had i thought love would be like this
i would have took religious bliss
and on a crucifix bestowed my kiss
not on your vinegar and honey lips

but when i see a lonely view
strait, narrow, without touch
i long for loving and yet painful you
to keep me on this winding track of love

Kevin Straw

how much of me, how much of her

how much of me, how much of her
this vision on my bed?
how much of my eye, of my heart
of lies of light created in my head?

have i again become a fool
mistaking clown's clothes for a king's?
allowed to think i really rule
when all i know is foolish things?

who is she in this night of nights
who makes me dream of love?
is she but different shades of light
just something i can touch?

is this my painting on the bed?
a two-dimensioned image of
what is now 3-d in my head
insisting it is love?

Kevin Straw

how my material body drifts

how my material body drifts
like sacrificial smoke into the sky
a pure unspotted and unwonted gift
to you my goddess passing by

i am the usual castle flesh and blood
in which a guarded love is sure
outside is bad, and inside good
where love's, at least in part, secure

but my heart is a match to me
when you my goddess passes by
and all love's stone security
smokes gratefully into the sky

Kevin Straw

how quickly winter is forgotten

how quickly winter is forgotten
when its wounds are salved by spring
and its tender children are begotten
from the Snow Queen by the new Sun King

yet at the heart of love is death
each nothing without the other
and in our blood and every breath
death is conjoined to life as brother

Kevin Straw

how sadly love fades into night

how sadly love fades into night
the doubtful shadows and the fake bright light
and you and i whose love shone bright
walk now beyond each other's sight

time now to let love fall asleep
wrapped in the memory of its day
when the air was fresh and the sun was steep
and dream its failing life away

tomorrow you and i are free
new-born from dying love
and once again we'll feel and see
the fresh air and the steeping sun above!

Kevin Straw

how we did kill each other...

how we did kill each other
locked in the mortal combat sex!
like envious sister brother
we endlessly each other vexed

with word touch look we tried
to win each other's soul for ever
we laughed we talked we cried
and tried to kill by being clever

power was our end and satisfaction
and nothing was too holy to be used
to win the medal of destruction
the accolade of murderous abuse

so long as one bowed to the other
so long were we convinced we'd won
the love that does not know the other
that's satisfaction of the self alone

Kevin Straw

how your beauty burdens you

how your beauty burdens you
and makes the rest of you untrue!

the time you spend before a mirror
to make sure there's no flaw or error!

there's no one who would not agree
there's none more beautiful to see

but you can never take for granted
there's nothing in your image wanted

your beauty has made you within
a hollow and unpleasant thing

and you in looking cannot see
the person that your beauty cannot be

Kevin Straw

i am a monkey with a mind

i am a monkey with a mind
but that's OK with me
for if i do what monkeys do
life is an ABC

but when i think and think again
of yes and no and bad and good
that's when i feel the special pain
the kind no monkey should

i'm happy if i feed and fight
and look for flees in fur
from sunrise till the welcome night
puts me to bed with her

but when the cold bright mind kicks in
and says "mere pleasure's not enough"
i make a loud unholy din:
- for a mindful monkey, life is tough!

Kevin Straw

i am afraid of poetry

i am afraid of poetry
because one poem may recall
the thing that worries me
and in one poem say it all

Kevin Straw

i am slave, and you are free

how is it that your shape in glass
can tie me to your will?
what over this small space can pass
that binds you to me still?

it's only light that comes to me
across this little room of ours
and yet it's like a magic key
that locks my heart in yours

i see you only as a shade
yet that is like a chain
that rounds my body and my mind
then round my heart again
you make your face up carefully
and though you do not look at me
you smile because you know the truth
that i am slave, and you are free

Kevin Straw

i asked a shadow on the wall...

i asked a shadow on the wall
which shade was most like of us all
which was most like the image
the virtual could manage

and it replied "in shadow land
there's nothing real to see or feel
reach out and you will pass your hand
straight through and never touch the real

you can't compare nothing with something
the image with its flesh and blood
the lips that singing are not singing
virtue with virtual bad and good

your shadow like all other shadows
lacks a substance to compare
however like you think it grows
it's you but really not you there"

Kevin Straw

i broke your face with one sharp word

i broke your face with one sharp word
and i shall not forget the bird of trust
that flew from your brown eyes
away into the forgetting skies

and all i did to lure it back again
was words that caused more pain
i wonder what if i'd not said that word
but also did i want to lose that bird?

Kevin Straw

i did not know you died till now

i did not know you died till now
full twenty years to the summer's day
when i looked at your new smooth brow
the smile death could not take away

of course i wept when your loved soul
was let go by the crematory flame
and smiled when i sometimes recalled
the love with which you voiced my name

yet only now your death to me is real
i know beyond a doubt that you are gone
and now some years too late i feel
your life is gone, and i'm alone

Kevin Straw

i don't kid myself

i don't kid myself -
i would give jesus away
for a touch of you

i would lie and cheat
all the way to hell
for a chance of sex

i would tell you
that i loved you
for one more time in bed

i don't kid myself
you've taken me over
body and soul and head

Kevin Straw

i fear the white unwritten page

i fear the white unwritten page
the start of heaven and the earth
because i know each word of rage
will not be true right from its birth

what can we say of life and love
that's ever true the way we wish
we really hug and kiss and touch
but writing find we only fish

the life each side of this worn sheet
before and after is itself and true
but this white sheet, what can i write
that's near the truth of me and you?

Kevin Straw

i fell i love with you piecemeal

i fell i love with you piecemeal
from head to heart and then to heel

first with your head - to be precise
it was your face i found so nice

and then your heart, it was so warm
(also, i found, the place of storm!)

and then the rest, unusually so
for it's the part love first will go

but now i've fallen out with you
for love of parts is only partly true

Kevin Straw

i frame your solemn last face in my last hours

i frame your solemn last face in my last hours
and cry away your crying as the rain dries flowers
love stops like dust left on the window pane
and life goes on translucent through the stain

i turn and turn again in a transaction with my bed
that for your love gives me my rest instead
cool as a funeral flower my cheek against a pillow
my heart more steady now is still a seasick billow

how i have hurried from your still last look
though it has emptied all my life of breath
i open up again my hundredth book
and try to find in it some formula for death

but dream your body eeling on my bed
glistening with lost youth from tail to head

Kevin Straw

i hate you and you hate me

i hate you and you hate me
we love too close to be hate-free
like two within a cell for one
love cannot be but bring hate on

banged-up in this confine of lives
the mind recoils and seeks for knives
and then come sudden hateful storms
that leave us limp exhausted worms

but oh the fresh and transient dawns
like earth's first paradisal morns
when we the Adam before Eve
cannot more closely cling and cleave!

then love can never be too much
then we cannot get close enough

Kevin Straw

i haunt the room where once we loved

i haunt the room where once we loved
it now seems real and i its shade
but, though a ghost, i see and touch
as though past makes the present fade

i see again the dawn discover you
and feel again a stunned surprise
that love can every day be new
as when we saw our first sun rise

i touch again your silky hair
so long, so bright, so soft, so black!
which rouses me as though i there
were flesh and blood, not looking back

my body seems to leave when i regret
those full-lived moments of my years
and i am there with you, and yet
both here and there a ghost of tears

Kevin Straw

i have been wintering in your bed

i have been wintering in your bed
for so long that day's night is here
and i sleep in both heart and head
careless if the sun and moon appear

i dream of bears that come and roar
and long-nailed walruses that paw
and fish that feed us more than full
the sun on us without a lull

now all that green stuff we called life
is buried in a bloodless white
and all that heat and storm of strife
is now hard diamonded night

and this long winter in your bed
has got into my heart and head

Kevin Straw

i have cried rivers for my past

i have cried rivers for my past
and sailed by them away from life
regret, remorse, have washed away
the good of living in today

i have by tears made me my castaway
and stranded me upon the isle
of nothing but the desert day
of your remembered smile

too late i have woke up my life
and seen the truth that is today
engaged in love and strife
beyond the dreams of yesterday

now sunlight greens the trees
the flowers grow as they please
yet still tears make them fantasy
a dream of life that hoodwinks me

this vast niagara of pain
flows back, not on, in hours
as though the heavy world turns back
and buries its ephemeral flowers

now is my castle ruined
unmade not by the gun but love
that is a memory of time
when building was enough

all this from when we crossed the floor
between the table and the door
and stopped to kiss out of the blue
a kiss that ruined me and you

Kevin Straw

i have gone every inch of you

i have gone every inch of you
like travellers in a new found land
learnt all the flora and the fauna too
the winds, the skies, the earth and sand

sometimes your hair is on my mind
and every strand explored
at other times your lips i find
for days and days adored

i know your eyes their every hue
and every subtle sign they make
when they reflect the mind of you
and make my heart awake

but oh the very core of you
the hidden part you hide
within an unmapped part of you
this mystery i'm denied

for all the beauty of your flesh
the hair the eyes that take my breath
there's something in the heart of you
that saddens when i think of you

Kevin Straw

i have gone everywhere for everything

i have gone everywhere for everything
love, thought, sex, and material bargaining
i have nosed out the smallest niches of the earth
to seek the smallest of their worth

but clouds have rooted out the lie
that virtue can be found in things
for they that lazy scud upon the sky
say virtue's found where rest is everything

from nothing earth and creatures formed
from nothing the great sun is warmed

Kevin Straw

i have no element of love...

i have no element of love
to warm my heart and wide my eye
it has been broke with too much love
and left my blood like ice

i am too olded now to care
the wires that hummed with life are cold
i have had friend and whore and wife
now dearly bought is cheaply sold

i watch the young heaped deep with youth
like ready corn at harvest time
my job's to scare the birds from them
and fence them in with wooden rhyme

Kevin Straw

i hope to teach you how to die

i hope to teach you how to die
to look your last on earth
how to cope with each as if last sigh
and finally resign your birth

first there are braver things to do
than meet the scythe of death
take love that take's breath out of you
and warm the earth with every breath

but when these have defeated you
and you are gazing on the night
and there is nothing more for you
than dying with the light

then i will teach you how to die
not by my speech or what i write
but in your eyes part truth from lie
by dying in your sight

Kevin Straw

i know the properties of sex

i know the properties of sex
but they are not enough
to solve the problem how to live
and be complete in love

take any woman, any man
and get some kind of pleasure
but take this for the whole and you
will then repent at leisure

love's spectrum is from earth to heaven
wherever you may think they are
it is the periodic table
of blood and flesh and care

Kevin Straw

i listen to a skylark sing

i listen to a skylark sing
the whole sky echoes with its note
such sound from such a little thing
as though it had apollo's throat!

i envy this small absolute
this tiny tough its battle hymn
who dares the whole damn world to shoot
and do its very worst to him

Kevin Straw

i loved before your eyes were blue

i loved before your eyes were blue
before i touched the hair of you
before i heard your voice i knew
the love i could not know was you

long days and nights i longed for you
without a name or shape for you
and yet when i at last met you
i felt you had been always you

and when i laid in bed by you
unseeing in the night with you
the first time i knew naked you
i knew i'd never been away from you

Kevin Straw

i loved you for the love you gave

how can i love you when you lie
inhuman in your bed about to die
when all that made you mine, i yours,
is worn out in your life's good cause?

the darkness darkens your blind eyes
clothes all your body in its shroud
and all that comes from you is sighs
that keep death just this side of proud

and yet this thing i see before me
this near-ghost fading to the grave
- why weep to see it go before me?
- because you're clever, good and brave?

oh no, i love you for the love you gave
that lives in me, not in the grave!

Kevin Straw

i once was time's obedient fool

i once was time's obedient fool
but now time is two-timing me
time hid from me time's fatal rule:
i'm guilty of time ageing me!

Kevin Straw

i remember waking still half-kissing

i remember waking still half-kissing,
the moon upon our nakedness still smiling
the air was still sweet from our loving
and still our song was softly playing

then for a time there was no time or wanting
the sensual and the sense were as one sleeping
we were not anywhere within man's finding
not in the world, its laughing and its crying

what was this gift for, what its meaning?
i do not know, except it is still living
a stream i feel is always darkly feeding
the still deep to the ocean's to and froing
that teaches and yet leaves the mind unknowing

Kevin Straw

i saw my mother when she died

i saw my mother when she died
as though she lived, and death had lied
she lay in bed upon her side
eyes open and her mouth was wide

i knew and did not know her death
until a mirror showed no breath
and then i knew my mother's eyes
and mouth were full of lies

i saw the truth and then i cried
this was the first time she had lied

Kevin Straw

i see you in a store fifty years on...

i see you in a store fifty years on
same hair, same face, and twenty-one
she dresses/moves like you again
and i am young in love and old in pain

and when she leaves the store then i
go back to you by inner eye
and for a while i gain relief
- a man by love, not ghost by grief

then then is now and as immortal
as when inside a church's portal
we quietly sat and watched at night
stone angels fly in a full moon's light

Kevin Straw

i see your tears dropp on the snow...

i see your tears dropp on the snow
because our love is old

i hear the cawing of a crow
as we break in the cold

my eyes grow tired of life and love
as hope pours out like breath

that freezes on the clear bright air
a shroud to hide this death

i see your tears have ceased to flow
and turned to ice the snow

Kevin Straw

i sit among the cemetery dead

i sit among the cemetery dead
and look down on the sunlit town
some say that these have gone ahead
whose names are written now in stone

but they lie here that clothed in glowing flesh
strutted the streets and sun-bathed in the park
ate, drank and laughed, loved each and every breath
worked hard in light, and loved well in the dark

but should they now desert their mother earth
whose law is live and die as do the flowers?
- they died that they might give us birth
to be like them, but make life fully ours

Kevin Straw

i thought i could saw you in two

i thought i could saw you in two
like an old time magic trick
a piece for me and a piece for you
and still your heart would tick

but any half i gave to you
and any half to me
was not the whole and none was true
and your heart ceased to be

but when i stopped the delusion
that the mirrored you would do
i joined your two halves into one
- which now includes me too

Kevin Straw

i wake, it's midnight and you've gone...

i wake, it's midnight and you've gone,
your side has not been slept upon
i dress and walk out of the flat
i wonder what you're playing at

i think of all that you might do
part knowing and not knowing you
i think of him and her, your mum and dad,
death and destruction, and your going mad

i phone the hospital and the police
i pray to god in a brand new belief
then all at once i see my pet
she'd only gone out for a cigarette!

Kevin Straw

i walk in summer storms

i walk in summer storms
and dare the lightning, feel the rain
as when i loved you once
fear forms in me akin to pain

your sultry and moist love
was once my storm-filled life
the thunderous lightning of your touch
a fearful and yet wondrous strife

those dangerous days i walked in you
i now record but do not live
why is it that my fearful love of you
i value still but can't forgive?

Kevin Straw

i watch you briefly hesitate

i watch you briefly hesitate
poised in the bedroom light
a moment of your love v hate
a tipping point of night

i know that you will come to me
your nakedness is proof
but that small moment makes me see
your heart stays still aloof

Kevin Straw

i watch you in the mirror brush your hair

i watch you in the mirror brush your hair
your eyes look through the image of your face
what does it mean for me that distant stare
not long since closed in our embrace?

how hard it is to tell the inner truth
when the body is so full of pleasure?
when two are close beneath one roof
how can one be so gross as measure?

but now it seems a shadow's coming
its harbinger this dimming of your eyes
that look out of our room far-seeing
towards some other paradise

and i can feel the gentle start of tearing
my flesh from yours you promised me
and sense a shadow of my fearing
the hell without you i shall be

Kevin Straw

i who now am mind

i who now am mind
was with you flesh
and with these words i seek to find
a bridge from thought to that caress

i listen to sweet music
i read and read of love
i've learnt the need to be a stoic
yet no philosophy's enough

for when i moved with you
on our small snow white bed
i knew what death was, and life too
what the heart was with the head

how is it i dream you now
more real than this bright screen
on which i try to find out how
the real is shadow, and the shadow dream

what a fool i was
to think heaven not enough
that the mere touch of you
could not be real love!

Kevin Straw

i will not see before my death...

i will not see before my death
the love that i intended
nothing from now to my last breath
to say why life should not have ended

i dreamt irrationally of love
of someone for my personal heaven
of look and soul and mind and touch
that would be my eve in my eden

i saw you like a look into the sun
blind substance of my heart's imagining
the end and at the same time the begun
the holy and the same thing sinning

but now i see an emptiness from now to death
of taken and exhausted breath

Kevin Straw

i wish there'd been no light to see you by

i wish there'd been no light to see you by
that we had met before God made the sky
and love by light had not invaded me
because this simpleton could simply see

why of the images that crowd the city
the small the large the crude the pretty
did this one infiltrate my heart by sight
and blinded me to see one thing by light?

of all its endless and all-reaching beams
the sun bounced one into my dreams
as though a mobile caller by mistake
had dialled at random my heart-ache

Kevin Straw

i wonder where those shadows are...

i wonder where those shadows are
that loved love like the rich their money?
who bathed in sex's milk and honey
who were the night's most brilliant star?

who in the curtained evening wall
were in their little room heaven's all?
whose bodies were their silk and gold
that, spent, saved them from growing old?

whose meetings were their paradise!
whose partings were their hell!
whose touches were beyond the wise!
whose kisses were too rich to sell!

where are those shadows now?
oh, on the dark side of the universe
and nothing matters any more
but shadows in a little verse

Kevin Straw

i'll take the punishment

how lovely if i went to sleep
within my deep redundant soul
and when dead went to keep
with God his sacred whole

but i prefer my soul to stride
along the human dusty track
and stumble over rock, and ride
the stormy pers'nal wrack

and if for that i burn in hell
or simply lapse to nothingness
i'll say with better men that all is well
and take whatever punishment

Kevin Straw

i'm now a tyrant in my love

i'm now a tyrant in my love
because i could not stand the pain
if she cried out "enough"
and tore the one flesh into twain

i used to never care if she
went soul or body to elsewhere
for she was never part of me
and cruelty in love was fair

but now my need has grown so much
i hardly dare make love to she
who might subtract the smallest touch
from the love i think she owes to me

Kevin Straw

i've lived on sand...

i've lived on sand for most my years
found all my views not straight or true
and not known where the sun should be
the ocean or the moon or you

i've lived and drowned at the same time
and sank and risen below/above
the shifting line of good from crime
that changed my view of hate and love

and yet i'm happy with this view
distorted though it clearly is
if your unmoving love
can move me with your kiss

Kevin Straw

if love were had by having

if love were had by having
there'd be no souls need saving
two would be true till death made one
then one could have love all alone

but having has no room for love
it is outside the self-sealed tomb
until love, like the angels, moves
the self away that love may come

Kevin Straw

if you are bitter at the break of love

if you are bitter at the break of love
in pieces which your heart can't fit
and heartily have had enough
of thinking how fit bit to bit

let the bits fall where they may
begin to start to walk away
your memory unmasked will make
a healing object of heart-break

Kevin Straw

if you have loved with lightless love

if you have loved with lightless love
then you have lit a deathless flame
where looks and kisses aren't enough
where light can never use its name

there is a point, no one knows where,
within the soul of woman/man
where love's all-powerful but spare
like fusion in the dark-heart sun

around this core love's planet parts
fly freely in determined lines
but at this sun's eternal heart
there is no end to space or time

there life/death take each other's face
in thoughtless and unspeaking darkness
it is the point of love's embrace
which seems to some quite loveless

Kevin Straw

i'm lonely like a sun-bright cloud

i'm lonely like a sun-bright cloud
your love still shining in me
yet, being gone, a shroud

i cry the memory of your face
but form a painful rainbow
of the vow of your embrace

if the sky did ever clear
the sun would show you to me
the cloud how far from here

Kevin Straw

in each other's arms our shining bodies...

in each other's arms our shining bodies
persuade the sadness to abate
as though we are a ship in hostile waters
whose lights ward off the blind black waves

we know out there the rocks are waiting
the sharks swim slowly without haste
some day or night we know we'll founder
though now love seems completely safe

and yet we can't escape the sadness
the far dark circle of our minds
that will in spite of all our gladness
guide love into its killing grounds

Kevin Straw

in this machine of blood and flesh...

in this machine of blood and flesh
this engine driven by burning breath
somewhere apart from things is soul
which is nowhere but is the whole

and being whole is everywhere
in every man/child/woman on the earth
- lay every part of me apart with care
and you will see what gave man birth

but put those parts together and there'll be
a different you, a different me

Kevin Straw

it took no time...

it took no time for you and i
to kiss and kill each other
and that is how (don't ask me why)
we died as friend and rose as lover

but love then ended at its start
for time had stood still to the end
but oh the years it took to part
- to die as lover, rise as friend!

Kevin Straw

it's not along a line we go

it's not along a line we go
but round and round about
for each life starts with what we know
then finds what is found out

demented with the invented
we think this is a line at last
but in the new we are presented
not with the future but the past

when love and sex and war and fame
and need for these and endless cash
are not a source of shame and blame
and turn within our grasp to ash

the circle still won't straighten out
but we will love the roundabout!

Kevin Straw

just when the music said...

just when the music said, we kissed
upon the very note, the very beat
and like a note that hangs upon the air
our kiss went on forever there

all things were passing by the room
in which we kissed that afternoon
but time and space dissolved away
and one kiss opened up eternal day

Kevin Straw

lady in my dreams descending

lady in my dreams descending
like a ghost into my head
does this mean my love is ending
for the banquet and the bed?

i had thought amor was deeply
rooted in my earthy heart
and my life was like a flower
from that dark and sensual part

i lived for other pleasures
taste and smell and sight and touch
all my energy and leisures
went to satisfy these lusts

but winged lady are you saying
all that time bought nothing good?
that the essence of good living
is not obtained from flesh or blood?

i believe you now my lady
purest white inside my head
but think that my belief is maybe
because i'm lonely in my bed

Kevin Straw

let me crawl naked on my knees...

let me crawl naked on my knees
upon the cold stone of regret
that i killed love with what i please
because my power allowed me it

i was the king of consequence
the only politician of our love
the source of energy and sense
you my appointee from above

but when i brought death down on it
upon the holy one of us
nature itself rebelled at it
and politics was not enough

and now i am the least of us
who once determined all
and though devoid of hope for us
i still on stony sorrow crawl

Kevin Straw

life breathes in and out

life breathes in and out
its round of smiles and tears
like a magic roundabout
a child both likes and fears

often love and hate
and pleased and disappointed
are equal in our fate
and hard to see disjointed

and if joy's all alone
it's like a cliff of white
that makes the heavens one
but the sea a deadly sight

Kevin Straw

life-choice

who knows if this choice or the next one
will lead to hell or heaven (if there is one) ?
the smallest error in a long-range gun
will hit the moon, miles from the target sun,
and yesterday which seemed to offer all
tomorrow will make all beyond recall

some people say 'think choice a kind of bet
that, if you lose, it's easy to forget'
but sometimes we put all upon one card
and losing makes forgetting deathly hard
and all life has to offer then
is nothing but regret and pain

so there's no easy way to joy
choice is a frail boat nature can destroy
then i say keep a good crew of your friends
the kind who see a voyage to the end
those who will ease your way through strife
and, if you fail, will love you back to life

Kevin Straw

like shadows not yet risen

like shadows not yet risen
we pass each other in the room
drink, talk, like living people
but each is buried in a gloom

how can ten seconds' conversation
convert the body to a shade
there was the sunlight in the window
and now there's sudden rain

between two selves we walk around
the past self and the future
and all the light, the feel, the sound
have been returned to nature

we are the undead of our loves
lost in a mythic melancholy
afraid to be the heroes of our lives
afraid of what is true and holy

a neighbour far away plays chopin
of love and war - so unafraid!
we have, defeated, crept from it
from holy promises we made

Kevin Straw

little baby in my arms tonight

little baby in my arms tonight
cry as if the world were ending
in your heart is still the light
that keeps old time from ending

i shall vanish from your sight
and you will still be here with me
for in your heart there is a light
of which a flame or two is me

and so i hold you in my arms
as much for my sake as of yours
love is a shield for all alarms
and a good sword for the future's wars

Kevin Straw

long grief has left my life unfilled...

long grief has left my life unfilled
tears have dissolved me near away
love was a defective thing that killed
the buds that sprung in hopeful May

love took me into its dark room
with promises of heavenly things
but four walls and the darkness make a tomb
and stop the hymn an angel sings

now in my regret i rot away
and dream of that which might have been
in your enticing kiss i found the way
but now in life the sculpture of a scene

Kevin Straw

loss of eden

had we not thought our love a crime
we would have had more space and time
to change a sin to virtue, and be free
of thinking it must never be

we could have changed the minds of all
who thought our little love a fall
from that unsullied eden they
had vainly made for us to play

but it was they the guarding angels
stopped us rebuilding paradise
by virtue barring all the angles
of love by precept, truth by lies

Kevin Straw

love can like a butchered lamb...

love can like a butchered lamb
despite the cruelties committed
be love again within the world
by simple faith permitted

i look at us still deep in love
remember deeper days of late
days wounding love to seeming death
a love new risen now by faith

Kevin Straw

love dies a little

love dies a little every day
slow like a minute hand
till suddenly surprised we say
'let go my hateful hand'

the tide has passed its utmost high
the sun's not right above
and the time has gone when you and i
can genuinely love

let go the grateful past
even if not spent
all dying things are waste
new love is heaven-sent

Kevin Straw

love has besought me all my life to follow her

love has besought me all my life to follow her
to walk into her paradise and taste her fruits
but i have stayed a baptist in the desert
feeding on honeyed locusts all alone

i have preached love to the unconverted
extolled her coming as presaging heaven
but i have not done as i have adverted
and i who loved love am now alone

what is it in me fends off undoubted goodness
that battles to prevent my natural and eternal gain?
why is it love that formed my flesh and spirit
cannot invade this soft impregnable domain?

Kevin Straw

love has stitched the wounds

i've sailed my own ship and been slave on it
both at the capstan and in the hold
been free to go wherever i wanted
and handcuffed to my fate in darkness

i have been sold and sold myself
worked for me as master and whipped me for not working
and love alone has made me one
an island where two can be one alone

i have been ripped untimely from the womb
and never really left it
learned from my parents all i need
then coldly on their deaths forgot it

but love has stitched the wounds
and reconciled me to my fate
and made me free of me, outside myself
and made me one in service to another

Kevin Straw

love hides inside my mountain heart

love hides inside my mountain heart
a fossil only to be got
if inch by inch is took apart
the petrification hiding it

and if the thing is brought to light
an image of itself in death
it will reveal its history
in stone instead of breath

Kevin Straw

love is a lamb and still a jaguar

love is a lamb and still a jaguar
when i lie silent where you are
the light shows shadows on the wall
of paradise and adam's fall

here by your sleeping breath i sigh
at once near crying and near joy
who would have thought our common flesh
could be a polar life and death?

cars and lorries roar outside
their shadows on the curtain ride
i nestle near as i may where you are
a lamb and still a jaguar

Kevin Straw

love makes its enemies of life

love makes its enemies of life
and unexpected wars from peace
it is the friend and enemy of strife
it breaks and mends within one piece

if you think love will be
pleasure from a to z
soon you will sadly see
its kindnesses-cum-cruelty

yet those who have been in love
and deep-wrecked in its sea
cannot get near enough
of its kindnesses-cum-cruelty

Kevin Straw

love, love, love!

you cannot love till you have seen
the sky is blue, the grass is green,
the sea is both and comes and goes
and all the beauty of the rose

by that i mean love's everywhere
not rare like making circles square
it's in the heart of the mustard seed
and in the damned unwanted weed

it's all the why and how and when
we're here with this sweet pleasure/pain
it internets the young and old
it's in the fearful and the bold

it's in the farthest star, the nearest earth
it comes complete with every birth!

Kevin Straw

love's armistice

it was more war than ever love
it was so loud and cruelly tough
as though love had to be gained through
a bruised and bloody me and you

one hand could easy number all
the loving moments i recall
when the guns fell silent and love's words
were like the chanting of war-weary birds

but then our warring hearts forgot
the enmity that was their lot
and with just one forgiving kiss
would make a passing armistice

Kevin Straw

love's precipice

how can the roughness of your lips
the shimmy of your snakish hips
be more to me than i in sunlit chair
can find in all the summer in my stare?

i drink cold wine and eat soft fruit
i note the bloom and spurt and shoot
the impudence of birds that dare the breeze
which dances even with the trees

yet i recall one winter bare
a room where you and i did blithely dare
the edge of death's own precipice
by loving more than all this is

and yet this pregnant and still virgin state
which animals each year create
is much the finer act of love
for, unlike us, it knows what is enough

Kevin Straw

love's sweet song

all round the world sounds love's sweet song
we think reflects all human hearts
but its dark core does not belong
to any strain an instrument imparts

there is a place unspeakable by man
that is his love/truth wrapped in one
like the silent infinite within the sun
that's never seen, or can be sung

Kevin Straw

lust dragged us to its ocean

lust dragged us to its ocean
to its dark chaotic roar
away from every notion
of safety on the peopled shore

our lips and fingers led us to
a universe for two
where every virtue bled into
the touch of me and you

yet still we loved the drowning
alive but dying to the earth
the eerie and inhuman changing
a real for a mermaid birth

the storm itself wrenched us apart
and tossed us to the shore
and there we found again a heart
to seek for love once more

Kevin Straw

lying eye

how is it that this clever i
looked right through you and did not cry
saw only bright unfathomed truth
the irreproachable green shoots of youth

i used to ponder in the night
is this so right it can't be right?
and scolded me for thinking so:
'when faced with virtue, let it go! '

it wasn't beauty, it wasn't sex
nor all those vicious things that come to vex
two people in the victory fall
of dangerous love's deep-misted call

i really looked at you and saw
a goddess, saint, a queen and all
those dreams that come from books
when one is not possessed by looks

then suddenly white turned to black
the feather bed into a rack
and over night broke out all hell
when i found out you lied so well!

Kevin Straw

make love, then sleep and let life grow...

make love, then sleep and let life grow
this is the sure way that i know
to bind us to the fragile earth
ensure the next seed and the sequent birth

forgo the imitation ape
(he does not spoil his world with rape)
stop clawing blindly into space
and arming in an endless race

tame all the sins that make
a hell on earth for just our sake
(by 'our' i mean the western power
which rents the earth out hour by hour)

make sure at harvest mankind knows
that for mankind the harvest grows
and all the treasures of the soils
share out with everyone who toils

you need not make your conscience bleed
to carry out this human deed
this is the meaning of fair shares:
their good is yours, as yours is theirs

Kevin Straw

midwinter's dead leaves on a tree

midwinter's dead leaves on a tree
how sad they have not fallen free
what point in hanging on when all
the rest fell in good time at fall?

i know the answer is biology
dead leaves have no morality
the mother-tree cannot do wrong:
can't kill too soon, let live too long

but what of us who think our birth
has cut us off from mother earth?
can we choose freely to be free
or are we subjects of the mother-tree?

Kevin Straw

monster's cave

you wouldn't live in a monster's cave
why live in the foul thing called a town?
why be subject to the beast's frantic rave
when you could live on a flowery down?

it towers above you its concrete flesh
and glares with a glass-fanged million-eyed head
it poisons and kills with its noisome breath
it eats you alive, and spits you out dead

but look at the home where man was born
his natural home for millions of years
where slow as the seasons the blood flows on
and there's time for joy, and time for tears

you wouldn't live in a monster's cave
- then look at the home where man was born!

Kevin Straw

most love though love is second hand

most love though love is second hand
most lovers want another lover
all marriages a large bandstand
that more than one band cover

if you want loyalty stay on your own
and make love with your good right hand
no love is love that won't disown
if not in flesh, in mind disband

Kevin Straw

my life goes back to when i loved you

my life goes back to when i loved you
like wheels seem to reverse their spin
and yet that seeming has become my view
- real life the dream i forward in

your body burned my soul away
and left me in the air a sacrifice
a thing to satisfy your holy flesh
that had no heat and was no ice

i see your body on our altar bed
as white and clear as easter flowers
and still i bow and worship you
that made and killed me those few hours

your lips still are a heaven to me
where immortality might last
a sweet infinity away from me
not in the future but the past

see! now i put my finger on your flesh
so real though in my dream of you
and still i sigh and catch my breath
as though this moment loving you

Kevin Straw

my life has been a parasite to me

my life has been a parasite to me
like that which hugs this cemetery tree
and all i feel or think or see
is half a parasite and half is me

all round me graves are graced with those
whose life was lived full to the close
who uneclipsed saw moon and sun
and grew full-statured everyone

but i have been half-height half-light
so high and heavy is this parasite
and why i am not buried there?
a question at which i often stare

Kevin Straw

my life has suffered its four seasons

my life has suffered its four seasons
is on the edge of wintry death
and i have tried against all reason
to make my life outlive its breath

but now, maybe because i'm old,
i'm letting go of this vain hold
to live as nature's not time's creature
as nature's servant, not its master

Kevin Straw

my life's your size, no more,

my life's your size, no more,
my universe is island you
of others and myself i am not sure
for you absorb the false and true

only when you look do i appear
your smile rewards myself with me
and if your eye becomes a tear
i felt uncertain i am here

love is equal to your lonely heart
my flesh and blood is yours
i seem apart but still a part
as from a candle flame light pours

Kevin Straw

my love affair

in london where the strangers grow
i loved a lass from o-hi-o
i minded not she hogged the bed
was always hungry being fed

nor did i mind her hearty laughter
that shook the house from floor to rafter
nor did i mind her voice too loud
that could have pacified a wembley crowd

i say "not mind" but what i mean
i took the fat for the splendid lean
but most the time, i don't know why,
we spent alone just she and i

one day within a london inn
where talking loud is mortal sin
she spotted my dead friends and me
and sat down for a drink or three

and as she talked and laughed and drank
into my english skin i shrank
but as her voice rang through the rooms
my friends peeked shyly from their tombs!

for she was like a breath of air
you don't get often in mayfair
then suddenly i loved this lass
and saw that i'd been dim and crass

she went back to her native shore
a note or two and then no more
but she began my love affair
with the USA, that country fair!

Kevin Straw

my love for you is faith alone

my love for you is faith alone
i have no reason to be yours
no words that i can bring to mind
can say why i now worship you

sometimes i go into a church
and hear the nonsense that they talk
but deep beneath the words, i know
love lives despite their feeble thoughts

so in my body's deepest part
far from the ever-changing light
my love in complete darkness lives
and i cannot ask darkness why

some say that love which does not say
its promises will surely die
as though love needs a chain of words
in case, being thoughtless, it runs wild

but no words hold my love for you
for my love cannot move, but stays
because of this strange truth:
the mind cannot know love that's faith

Kevin Straw

my memory of you in your red dress

my memory of you in your red dress
still speaks to me the bible and its story
your saving heart and selflessness
the nearest i will get to glory

eternity between my hands
my prayerful lips, my hopeful heart
all else was built on sinking sands -
the end of things, but this the start

an anchor in a restless sea
is still beneath the storm and stress
so one unmoving good in me
is the thought of you in your red dress

Kevin Straw

my way

my way is now your dark and sacred heart
the worth of you, the truly loving part
it's there ('a nowhere' disbelievers say)
that's everywhere for me by night and day
where my unsteady world is calmed
where either by the other is not harmed
there is my life, my truth, my way
against all doubt and terror my strong stay
near you or far, with others or alone,
we are not separate, mingled, but as one.

Kevin Straw

night owls its way across the lamplit grass

night owls its way across the lamplit grass
a full moon butters up the earth
and i my hand across your belly pass
and feel the thrill of a new birth

here in this brick-built home we feel
the kind of safety no animal can have
and yet like they we hotly seal
the fate from which no rationale can save

the clock strikes midnight with a pride
as though there weren't a trillion stars
my love a moment in you died
and made a life that gives the world its scars

somehow i feel our lives above
the earth and all its beasts and flowers
for we remember and expect to love
in spite of loving's sad and bitter hours

yet knowing makes each act a crime
if it be not in time with nature's time

Kevin Straw

no other moment in eternity

no other moment in eternity
could better her arms holding me
no god or god-king ever could
give such a present, such a good,

no christ upon a cross had such
a healing and eternal touch
within her arms was nothing and then all
as spring turns emptiness to fall

all stars all moons all meteors were
mere lighting to my love for her
no time and space, no good or bad
could qualify the love we had

all gifts, though gold, could not outweigh
the moment she held me that day

Kevin Straw

no poetry can replace my fingers

no poetry can replace my fingers
they say great love still lingers
but the only wordless ache i know
is where my loving words can't go

and find the warmth and silk of you
where love was palpable not true
and being touch was all we knew
or ever could know of the true

dark in our den of night i found
the soul of you so firm and round
as though god breathed in you his breath
and got himself clothed in your flesh

and by my little nerves i could
touch in the sensual the absolute
and not know how the bad and good
could separate the branch from root

in this small moment of relenting time
when by my fingers i could find
the answer to all questions that i could
ask of the brightest sun, the darkest wood

Kevin Straw

not love, though endless copies of the same

no love, though endless copies of the same,
came to me in my early years
until i learnt to say with love your name
and found the sharp original of tears

one finger in the dead of night
awoke in me an adam after eve
of fondest and yet fiercest of delight
when sin was yet to make the pure heart grieve

love was most sin and most delight
one second after our one flesh was two
before the gate was opened and we
arm in arm in stark remorse went through

yet if i had the choice again
of love with you and its attendant pain
i would reach out and touch your curling hair
and die imperfect to be perfect there

Kevin Straw

nothing from nothing

it's strange we've no beginning
- that far back there's no cosmic crack
from which we hurtled crying into life
from nowhere, nothing to this mortal strife

we love and hate. look back and dream again
we suffer death and yet go on
as though there is some purpose
to the nothing that begun

so when i touch you, think it real
on earth as it is in heaven
is it the start of nothing that i feel
although my heart is riven?

Kevin Straw

nothingness

sometimes i feel that i am pinned upon
the interface of everything and nothing
and somehow i am looking on
an absent here and now and something

the universe and time and space
seem gathered all behind my back
and i am stomach-sick to face
a thing no word or sense can crack

and then the ordinary floods round
and fills that dreadful emptiness
i see the universe and hear the sound
that covers up its nothingness

Kevin Straw

now i am old and shrink from midnight

now i am old and shrink from midnight
to hear an owl outside my room
i who adored and still adore you
dream your beauty in the gloom

i know time passing soon will kill me
and you with my still soul will die
but know till then still i shall see
your beauty still in my mind's eye

my many tides have given and took
the worst and best of me away
and i have holy things forsook:
the lasting for the passing day

but still your beauty will live on
some say still life when i am gone

Kevin Straw

now i can teach you only death

now i can teach you only death
to look your last on earth
how to cope with each as if last breath
and finally resign your birth

first there are braver things to do
before the end of time:
give love that gives love back to you
forgive the sinner, hate the crime

but when these have defeated you
and you are gazing on the night
and nothing more occurs than you
are dying with the light

then i can teach you how to die
not when I speak or write
but when i brave death to the final sigh
so look and learn, die right!

Kevin Straw

now i have consigned your flesh to darkness

now i have consigned your flesh to darkness
to the river of forgetting that will flow
beyond the land that i can touch and know
that i may live without this deathly sadness

the memory of you, your pale flesh and raven hair,
has been a magnet to the past and into death
a bar to sunlight, and to this life's sweet breath,
a long forever spiralling and downward stair

but now i hold to the green tree, the living flower,
like in an ocean a drowning man a boat
that keeps despite of storms his life afloat
and promises him his future from this hour

go lovely woman who is more than dream for me
a shadow that disturbs the night and day
fade into the mind's oblivion, go away
to that vast keep of forgotten memory

Kevin Straw

oh were i with you once again...

oh were i with you once again
hearing the winter cry upon the window pane
its screech that everything must die
yet feel the sun shine where we lie

and see the heaps of shrivelled leaves
orphaned from their cruel trees
and watch the fog grip icily the earth
whilst we two lie like babes at birth

and sense that death himself is near
who puts all nature on his bier
yet know his universal clutch
cannot reach where we kiss and touch

they say love is a passing thing
must have its own sad wintering
yet with you i knew love would last
and long to know again, now love is past!

Kevin Straw

one day you'll look on me the dead

one day you'll look on me the dead
bereft of feeling toe to head
and look with wonder at my eyes
closed now forever to the skies

and think what dreams passed though my brain
what my heart had of pleasure or of pain
and how i now rest thankfully to be
powerless to feel or think or see

but never know how in the dark
love sang like the eternal lark
and how i loved you though i should
have said i loved you when i could

yet you will look upon a happy man
who did, and now does, only what he can

Kevin Straw

one door it took

one door it took which, shut in strife,
brought down my house of love and life

i had let go the rafters, floor and wall
and long had thought the place would fall

so you in leaving did but shut the door
- i made the ruin by my neglect before

Kevin Straw

one half of man's soul is a con

one half of man's soul is a con
just like the alcoholic one
it paints the world a rosy glow
and makes us feel we think we know

it fools this self-made (self-called) serf
to think itself the measure of all worth
and makes us strut around the earth
as though God willed it us at birth

it makes us love where we should not
and hate where loving should be got
it lures us into instant pleasure
for which we will repent at leisure

soul has a finer side of course
but this side guarantees remorse

Kevin Straw

one kiss did shatter us to dust

one kiss did shatter us to dust
one touch of strangers' lips
destroyed two worlds by lust

one pleasure one cold afternoon
upon a strange bed in a friendless room
turned richness into poverty
two futures into doom

yet who can say if that sure death
upon the hot propulsive breath
we could deny if given again,
though knowing, the ensuing pain

is every moment ours to say?
the way of life a chosen way?

Kevin Straw

only the pure in heart should write poetry

only the pure in heart should write poetry
only the children amongst us, only the simple,
only the men and women who have loved
without counting its pain, who have given
and given again

only the fearless who will dare night and day
only those who are prepared to live or die
only the tender, the soft, the kind, the healers
whose hands give peace, whose feet tread where
no feet have been

and yet here am i, in pieces with sin,
pleading to you to take me in to your heart
and forgive me for being one who is not
worthy to blemish the paradise of your dreams
with my poetry

all i have in the end is my tears of repentance
staining the spotless page with grief
because either words or death is my fate
and i cannot escape the cell of myself my punishment,
save by poetry

Kevin Straw

originality is another thing

originality is another thing
the winds don't have it nor the rains
there's no one cannot speak or sing
and many who can take the pains

but two or three at most
can name their time and place
and put a finger on the heart
and make it beat their pace

Kevin Straw

our basement room

even now our basement room
we slept in all one summer long
so dark and cool like a catacomb
haunts my memory, right or wrong

love was not there, at least not whole,
but flesh alone within the gloom
and arms blind to the reaching soul
kept us like prisoners in that room

i daydream i go back down there
and with soul fill the empty flesh
that blood may move with loving there
and grace grace passion's careless breath

but could we stand that shadowed place
with love (or even like) in our embrace?

Kevin Straw

our path of love is many swords

our path of love is many swords
their edges honed by thoughts and words
my feet are bleeding from the touch
inflicted by your tempered love

and you are stumbling on the way
my love's demands have made for you
we scream and shout but do not say
there is another better way

Kevin Straw

our private space of love

one cold night in the park we stand
beneath our own bright lamp
but neither light nor cold can pierce
our private space of love

the swans are shadows on the lake
a few birds twitter in the trees
but they are creatures alien to
our private space of love

around the park the city hums
and glares and hides the distant stars
but we are in a different sphere:
our private space of love

we stand and hold and kiss awhile
but we are separate from touch
we live in some strange world that is
a private space of love

Kevin Straw

our years seem darkened to a church for you

our years seem darkened to a church for you
in which your face alone shines through
the air is thick with the remembered scent of you
i touch for blessing my stone memory of you
your lips are burning still above my prayer for you
your eyes show heaven through their stain of blue
i had not thought i would remember you
in a cathedral of my love for you
my spirit kneels, i close my eyes to you
at last at peace and solaced for my loss of you

Kevin Straw

pray death, in time, will take us all

pray death, in time, will take us all
for having lived we then must fall
into the ready hands of death
whose proper work is stop our breath

forfend that we go on forever
sans beauty and sans being clever
that having done what we must do
we linger to abort the new

youth must possess all space and time
to do its good, commit its crime,
- for that, old men and women must
commit their bodies to the dust

all farmers have to reap and plough
to let the past flower in the now

Kevin Straw

river of light

i watched you look out of the window one night
at the cars flowing on in a river of light
and i suddenly felt a thrill of a fright
that you would one day be gone from my sight

in the morning (though why i cannot yet say)
we quarreled, you packed, and walked quickly away
as i watched your taxi grow small in my sight
i remembered the way you looked out at the night.

the curtain is closed now as i lay on my bed
the shadow of you still haunting my head
and i suddenly know the power of the night
full of cars passing by in a river of light.

Kevin Straw

rock of the aged

one thousand celsius they say
will make a body burn away
some up the chimney, some to ash
(a little urning for a lot of cash)

and then god, using all his wits,
will glue together all the bits
and take us from our home the earth
to heaven in a second birth

but if i knew we'd live forever
yet found that god was not so clever
and kept the body weak but spirit strong
i'd rue each single hymn i'd sung

mind you, picture the scene
if all in heaven were, say, eighteen
i'd know my children at that age
but would they know their parentage?

so keep the wrinkles but beneath
buff up the blood, god, give it teeth!
and please make heaven less C of E
more muslim with a girl or three

(i've had enough of "young at heart"
when I am hardly able to self-start)

Kevin Straw

serpentine love

one dreary cold november day
when we walked by the serpentine*
we sat outside a small café
and kept the cold away with wine?

the twilight grew upon the water
a cold grey mist came in the air
but we grew full of love and laughter
as though the wine made summer there

but then the winter darkness deepened
the cold gripped cruelly our flesh
and then the love the wine had cheapened
went with our shivering breath

*a park lake in London

Kevin Straw

seven

you and i though unbelievers
still tried to make love heaven
ourselves ourselves the blind deceivers
who thought a zero more than seven

and so we ran away from nature
into the barren land of faith
until there was no guiding feature
and love became a wandering wraith

had we but known enough of lust
and were content with earth and sky
love would have been both fair and just
and not an abstract and an empty lie

Kevin Straw

shade

how is the shade of your face still in sight,
a mask more alive than those in real light?
you body and mind float elsewhere
but your eyes and your mouth are patent here

i busy myself and drink too much
for there's nothing to see and nothing to touch
the shade of your face is all i perceive
a ghost that can't give, a shade that can't save

and i, your tiresias, can see it see all
when the shade of your face hangs like a pall
reminding me of the fire that's now dead
but stubbornly signals from heart and from head

Kevin Straw

she is wild honey and tamed fire

she is wild honey and tamed fire
that says you dare not and you can't resist
she is the farthest and most near desire
the least wanted and most missed

her necklace on her breast like stars
a constellation that spells Love
her smile which faintly shows love's scars
says stay away or gently touch

she lives still in my heart and hand
when i am far away from her
the nearer her until i stand
my heart beats louder love and fear

Kevin Straw

some love is like the drifted snow

some love is like the drifted snow
it's cold at first but then we know
a pleasant falling into sleep
a gladness that we need not keep
ourselves alive, and that the fight
is over now forever

and all that dressing-up and being clever
and being somewhere on the table
of being beautiful or able
no longer matters here
where there's no anger and no fear

and so quite pleasantly in snow
we cease to care, and cease to grow

Kevin Straw

sometimes an angel sits upon my shoulder

sometimes an angel sits upon my shoulder
and says: "you've got so old you can't get older
best finally give up on life
give up the love, the joy, the strife
if death's the end or there's a heaven
you've got good odds, at least they're even
you've done it all, if you have not
it's too late now for you cannot! "

but as he rants i loudly laugh
"get off my back you dismal seraph
as long as i can breathe i will go on
and think by moon and feel by sun
and even were i paralysed
my death tomorrow prophesied
i'd stick with life, not take your offer
which each way seems to me a coffer
i'll never dice with life and death
whilst i have left the smallest breath"

Kevin Straw

sometimes i feel i've missed one thing

sometimes i feel i've missed one thing
a glorious key to everything
as though the work for pleasure against pain
has been all loss no gain

then sometimes in a lovely song i hear
this key which might unlock the door
and all my life's lost worth appear
and validate what i've lived for

but art can only feign the key
the song give answer till it dies
what warrants time for you and me
is in our children's hearts and eyes

Kevin Straw

sometimes i have death comfort me

sometimes i have death comfort me
when i am weak, afraid and pitifully small
i let death deep inside of me
surrender to his majesty my all

sometimes when loving conquers me
and leaves a speared and battered heart
i ask death bind my wounds and be
the winter to a green spring's start

death's been with me from infancy
his shadow like a kindly ghost
for his negation comforts me
and from his nothing comes my most

Kevin Straw

sometimes you switch your life off...

sometimes you switch your life off
that someone else be brighter
you feed the blood in you
into more needy veins

you sacrifice yourself
that someone else might live
your self-negation
seems worth the all you give

your soul left pale and bloodless
you haunt the world an empty self
that the reward for being selfless
might compensate a living death

but no one is worth your blood
and nothing is made more good
by your choice of crucifixion
by the self-made nails you hang upon

Kevin Straw

still now your night-black hair...

still now your night-black hair
(pictured behind my tear-closed eyes)
can make me dream i'm walking there
with you beneath starred midnight skies

we wander street to gentle street
our lips, though parted, full of love
the whole world, liquid and spring-sweet,
the sky curves kindly over us

nature itself stops cruelty and killing
(whilst we are thus, there is no hate)
god himself with all his power is willing
to set aside his judgment date

i am ecstatic with you there
outside the bounds of time and space
translated by your night-black hair
the depthless softness of your embrace

Kevin Straw

stone world

i lie in bed
the curtains open
and watch the stone world
slowly disappear

when you and i
were still unbroken
we'd let the stone world
go without fear

but now i rush
to close the curtains
and wish the stone world
and the day were here

Kevin Straw

suddenly one hair of yours is grey

suddenly one hair of yours is grey
and my heart stops as though the day
went instantly from day to night
- i am dumbfounded by the sight

oh you and i have changed a lot
(in thirty years how could we not)
but all that time i never knew
time move for us as now i do

for this one hair has made me see
time move at last for you and me
and in one second i have gone
the thirty years that time's moved on

Kevin Straw

summon me to death by bells

summon me to death by bells
choiring at the top of heaven's towers
lift me on their hard bright swell
the music writ by highest powers

make me recall as they resound
the start and end of all creation
and tell me i at last have found
the eternal note of pure elation

Kevin Straw

sunk

i'd write about daffodils if i knew what one looked like
but i am sunk in the city among stone rootless flowers
and there they stretch each side the sidewalk
towering and fingerless to reach the sky

oh how many eyes they have! glassy and blank
watching the clouds without noting them pass
home to light birds till turning their lights on
they shoo them away with a fixed empty glare

and how do i cope in this frail concrete canyon
crumbling away with each slight breath of wind?
i walk like a stranger careful and straight
like a bird pecking bits from the mouth of a tiger
or a bold daffodil if i knew what one looked like

Kevin Straw

surrender was a word i never knew

surrender was a word i never knew
until i met the steely sword of you
i thought i had the world in view
and i was king of loving you

and so i dressed in fatal crown
i eyed and beat my courtiers down
but at your smallest gentlest frown
i laid my trembling body down

Kevin Straw

that we shall all die is cause for cruelty

that we shall all die is cause for cruelty
and yet we love, we show kindness
what keeps me from eating you, you me,
and devouring love with mindlessness
is not god, but the rose and the green tree
putting aside the pain of loneliness

Kevin Straw

that woman's powdering her face...

that woman's powdering her face
when she has broken my heart
some flakes escape in the air
while my life is falling apart

she looks at the glass in her fist
i cannot see for my grief
she smiles alone at herself
i can find no such relief

she shuts her compact and looks
out of the window at nothing
and leaves me with grief for two
and many years of forgetting

Kevin Straw

the end of paradise

we kissed and all the precious things i knew
went out the windows of my life
and i was in an empty room with you
as at the end of paradise

and only flesh and blood we knew
the air in which we touched and kissed
the light that showed the eyes of you
in which the things we were were missed

a startling beam of light shone through
and showed the dust of life and death
the fatal flaw of me and you:
that we believed love was in breath

and in the empty echo of the room
we heard a busy and ungetting womb
that would absorb both you and me
back to a sunless and eternal sea

Kevin Straw

the fall

some say because the snow-flake
has design
it proves the world was made by
the divine

so why are we, so-called god's own,
not perfect
but by god's own design for us
show a defect?

what did we do that snowflakes
show design
but we, his very image, are a
lesser sign?

Kevin Straw

the master-torturer regret

he wakes me up a dozen times a night
the master-torturer regret
he brings you to my sleepless sight
a potent ghost from love's long dead

he cunningly half-kills me by
making me remember how
i left you with our love still high
so then and there is here and now

then after this he tortures me
lays on my mind his finest knife
and whispers 'you did this, not she,
you broke her heart, and broke your life'

Kevin Straw

the night is quiet for an owl's cry

the night is quiet for an owl's cry
haunting my room as i type this
in all the trillions of indifferent stars
i have my tiny realm and he has his

in space and time what does it mean
this passing jot of flesh and blood?
what point has even fame in history
when it will fade, the bad or good?

yet i can feel within the winging breast
the need that makes each life an absolute
- however insignificant the beast
desire is part of an eternal truth

Kevin Straw

the shape of you

how is it that the shape of you
the texture of your skin
could keep me manacled to you
though it were hellish sin?

i spat on all was good and true
i changed my heart to stone
to be in solitary, me with you,
together all alone

Kevin Straw

the sun was in the grave of night

the sun was in the grave of night
the moon shone with its lost-soul light
and the seagulls hardly stirred as i
walked on their cliff between sea and sky

a wind began to wail and whip
and far away i saw a ship
fighting against the new-sprung gale
to make the harbour without fail

i thought of you and me from birth
aboard this cockleshell the earth
locked in this little ship of life
prey to the universal storm and strife

and as the wind sang in my ears
my head was filled with dreadful fears
i felt a dangerous despair
that we are voyaging nowhere

but then you came to stand by me
and as we dared the wind and sea
i felt that love, a seagull cry,
makes good our being here to die

Kevin Straw

the sun was setting when we said goodbye

the sun was setting when we said goodbye
i hardly knew to laugh or cry
to lose someone i'd loved so much
and yet of whom i'd had enough

i noted buds were forming on the trees
and birds were dancing in the breeze
my heart was full of unknown fears
yet half of me was smiling, half in tears

the sun by now had left the sky
but by the moon i felt no need to cry
i kissed your lips for one last time
but in my sorrow came this rhyme

Kevin Straw

the sunlight through a winter tree

the sunlight through a winter tree
falls like a veil on you and me
a cold breeze moves your careful hair
you put a guarding hand up there

and still the world moves us away
to another place, another day
- how time's strong hand can move
so easily so firm a love!

our little scene's a tiny pyre
consumed within time's giant fire
and all that massive joy and sorrow
is ashes now and less tomorrow

was it for nothing that we gave
a precious part of birth to grave?
you turn, i turn, and with the day
from all to nothing turn away

and yet we have what time must miss
the memory of love, and this

Kevin Straw

the train of life

there was a day i could have stepped aboard
the train of life for nowhere in no street
and laughed and cried as my young spirit soared
to a heart-stopping and heart-racing beat

but i sold my legend for a vain annuity of truth
its round and concrete coins weighed me down
and all the days i could have had my youth
were passed by with a grave and holy frown

Kevin Straw

there are those whom death has made...

there are those whom death has made, not life
who in the midst of all the strife
have floated on death's frozen breath
like skiers on the ocean's depth

they look with blue eyes on the earth
on death and marriage and on birth
and still the beating of their hearts
is steady, not in fits or starts

and when they answer the last call
when nothing sucks in all their all
they slide still smiling down death's throat
without a joyful or complaining note

Kevin Straw

there is no mastering of the air by birds

there is no mastering of the air by birds
the verb "to master" is but human words
we are but aliens built by alien tools
the heart itself subject to alien rules

the bird and air are two in one
as is the sunlight in the sun
it knows not where it is but flies
by instinct in instinctive skies

even our homes are only near
to the human hand and mind and heart
we have exchanged sheer being here
for a double life of being apart

we think by art we know the bird
but thinking makes a parting word

Kevin Straw

there was a fast stairs to the blue

there was a fast stairs to the blue
we breathless stepped on, i and you,
and for a while we lived as crowned
by a trillion shining stars around

we needed no food air or water
when we had endless love and laughter
and for a bed we had each other
and for a home the arms of lovers

then all at once it dawned upon us
the earth was flying farther from us
the more we loved, the more we knew
the more like aliens we grew

then down and down, and sad and sadder
the fast stairs now seemed like a ladder
we reached the earth, rejoined the race
but i never saw again her face

Kevin Straw

there was a season...

there was a season when a touch
taught all to me i know of immortality
within one smallest of the great cosmos
i knew the all of god in me

and yet how tears and dreams would tear
the fabric of my blank infinity
and make me rage and howl and swear
that such a heaven was not for me

for in the sum of time and space
small things defy their flawlessness
the hand that needs, the weeping face
demand the heart returns from weightlessness

Kevin Straw

there was a time your mouth was all

there was a time your mouth was all
that small red place my truth
but i was young, and can recall
i was excused by youth

but now that i'm far gone in age
i think youth is enough
to know the red mouth's rose-red rage
is true in thought and touch

only my children would i not give
for that sweet kiss that made me live
and taught me more than any word
the endless bounty nature can afford

Kevin Straw

there's no more poetry about you

there's no more poetry about you
least not the poetry that's true
but you tread in an empty room
its echoes reach into my gloom

i see you clearly by the light
that shines into my sightless night
your summer dress a warm blood red
that lets your bare arms clasp my head

your black bright hair my fingers knew
and still know as i think of you
your breasts that made my worry sleep
still small yet infinitely deep

and oh your mouth, ship of surprise,
beneath a clear blue sky of eyes
that still look shadowless at me
so warm, so pure, so fresh, so free!

you stand still now within the room
and watch me type this silly poem
while all my heart longs to be there
my fingers wordless in your hair

Kevin Straw

there's nothing that can move me now...

there's nothing that can move me now
while i watch you sleep naked on my bed
the world could end, jesus could come
and still your figure fill my eyes and head

this absolute is nearer god than flesh
i promised to another once in duty
and he forgives me as i stand entranced
for i am his through your unearthly beauty

Kevin Straw

there's nothing but death in this life...

there's nothing but death in this life since you
packed your case one evening and walked away
and tears can do nothing to ease him through
who prefers not to kill but torment me this way

my eyes are fixed open in memory of you
through the shroud of my grief like spiritless ash
and all those eternal thoughts i thought true
are eternally still in my memory's lash

there's more blood and more down my infinite side
and blackness from most black deepens in me
my grief is entombing me stone dead inside
yet i haunt me by me for your walking from me

Kevin Straw

this

everything i know/will know is here
beneath my hand this silent night
for it's the universe i touch when i revere
your black skin with my fingers' light

what more is there of time and space?
what star is not within my reach?
when i my life and death embrace
your ocean-all upon my desert beach?

how can one touch of you be all
of one that was and will be and now is?
how can my mind not now recall
or look for anything in time but this?

Kevin Straw

this is about my love for you

this is about my love for you
that outbid god and anything that's true
that made a finger on your flesh
worth more than good or bad or breath

i still remember like adam eve
a paradise that made us touch
that leaving us still made us grieve
and grieve without the possibility of love

all this all that all then and what will be
somehow was centred you and me
and in a little basement room
love found its universe and beating womb

how often was that small room drowned
by tears shed by a heart that knew
that our love was so underground
the more it stayed the more hell grew

and yet and yet like growth in acid rain
what still insisted in your heart and mine
was like a rose of pleasure in the pain
a thing that must be, but was doomed to die

- call this the message of eternity:
that love destroys love, look at you and me!

Kevin Straw

this is the last night i shall lie...

this is the last night i shall lie
sleepless without your next-me hate
the last hour i shall cry alone and quiet
your warmth a feel away too late

i have spent years in hate with you
love like the occasional flower
grown in the summer and the winter too
at every odd and unexpected hour

they used to chalk debts on a slate
that paid could be wiped out
but all our debts of love and hate
are scratched by scream and shout

tomorrow will be a new birth
we'll step from nothing into life
and find our way around the earth
and laugh and cry in happy strife

Kevin Straw

this moment is the seed that made the world

this moment is the seed that made the world
when on your lovely body my hand strays
and i feel love come through my trembling fingers
as to the sky the sun's first dazzling rays

before dust turned to adam then to eve
there was a need to people earth
and that need now my fast heart feels
to give a loving world its first new birth

touch started all this vast infinity
a finger felt to life those endless stars
and like that touch my loving fingers make
the ache that needs to make a new world ours

Kevin Straw

this quietness is more than love

this quietness is more than love
this stillness in our moonlit room
i on the chair, you on the bed
reflective in the circling gloom

some roses on the table there
daub passion on the midnight air
but this transcends their rude red stare
while i sit here, and you lie there

i feel the timelessness of us
the strange pretension of the grave
the needy body's endless fuss
for what we lose, yet think we save

a passing cloud brings darkness now
your perfume drifts upon the air
- i move, the spell is broken now,
and love is like the roses there

Kevin Straw

this single isle of me and you

this single isle of me and you
is now a deep divided land
and hate's barbed wire between us two
prevents the healing hand

i want to be alone beyond the reach
of your small hand, soft voice, bright eyes
to find a silent and untrodden beach
and lie as dead beneath the skies

i want to stare as clouds pass by
across the endless emptiness
and see the sun itself ascend and die
in such a darkness as my loneliness

how can we two, once one, now be
each other's deadly enemy
yet occupy love's territory
this single isle of you and me?

one day we'll strip it, plant and tree,
to make two lonely ships that will
take once for all your heart from me
and mine from yours, for good or ill

for who can tell if there will be
another single isle like you and me

Kevin Straw

this wound's forever i have given me

this wound's forever i have given me
a mystic wound right through my heart
which from the past has riven me
set soul and body quite apart

they say love binds and makes whole
the heart that's in both hell and heaven
- i thought it love when body/soul
by lust to your warm arms were driven

now nature mocks me day and night
a ghost while real life comes and goes
not home in darkness or in light
pinned to the past as real time flows

but would i change this for that ache
of love that is a future pain?
is this regretful memory a fake
and would i risk such love again?

Kevin Straw

till i loved you

it wasn't till i loved you
i knew what kisses meant
and all the times i touched you
without love weren't worth a cent

odd how the heart's own feeling
changes the meaning of the flesh
and brings a kind of healing
a touch of God's own breath

Kevin Straw

time has made the sky a bruise

time has made the sky a bruise
i look at it and know we'll lose
for love has had its wedding day
and time now ushers it away

that cheesy moon, that star-iced sky
what madness we were guided by!
we see them now, the fakes they are,
mechanical, unearthly far!

i am the sky now bruised to black
i need to leave and not come back
i say "these trickling tears of pain
will make a river to love's sea again

for time must drain the last of light
before the sun again is bright"
but can't believe love's after this
so blackly bruised this midnight is

Kevin Straw

to all those who can find no peace...

to all those who can find no peace
within their ragged piecemeal life
whose life is heartache without cease
who only know defeat and strife

to those who lead a stop-start life
that dawns and ends that night again
who for the best forever strive
though hope forever leads to pain

to these please offer only love
(even given with misgiving)
- the bowed, the beaten, and the lost
help them to live their hard-won living!

Kevin Straw

to the broken-hearted

there's no love worth so many tears
that they should wash your life away
no pain so bad that all the years
you have to come must end this day

however heavy on your heart
despair weighs for an ended love
there is a low from which you'll start
to rise again and cry "enough! "

wait for this moment, do not kill
a perfect love that might have been
were you alive to gladly fill
new longing with your love again

no wound is worth your willing death
while your heart beats, while you have breath

Kevin Straw

touch of lips

why for a touch of lips did i betray
the better part of me?
cast all aside with no dismay
believing i was free?

oh when i entered you the first
i shrouded all was good
and gave the best unto the worst
for a tomb made for my blood

Kevin Straw

two lips

i sold my fortune and my soul
for two lips that would make me whole
two thin red strips that seemed to me
a way to immortality

i feel them now as though on mine
two unsurpassable red lines
and for that niche of sheer delights
i sold away my moral rights

i have not got away from them
they hold me like a root a flower's stem
and in the very dead of night
they give a vivid and seductive light

they mock all my pretensions now
to say what love is, and the how

Kevin Straw

universal lie

how glad i am the many stars
did not observe our bed last night
that just the moon and sun
could see what love is when love-lite

the moon saw us lie down at night
our lying lips and arms embrace
- it found us out by holy light
and frightened flew off into space!

the bright sun saw us dress and go
our separate and single ways
it got to know how false we were
and set the faulty world ablaze

yet only earth's own moon and sun
saw love that should have not begun
- what if the universal eye
had seen our universal lie?

Kevin Straw

we broke love's lock

we broke love's lock
hot-started it
and madly drove
away from town

we laughed at friends
who hated it
and vainly tried
to flag us down

there in the dark
we totalled it
far from the light
and warmth of town

but did not dare
admit to it
or call the mender
from the town

then each of us
deserted it
and walked alone
back to the town

Kevin Straw

we found the absolute one night

we found the absolute one night
within a glow of soft lamplight
the absolute should not be there
but in a palace or great house somewhere

but somehow in our lips and arms
love's wizard wrought his magic charms
and there we were ascending to
the heaven of the beautiful and true

and faced with God we held our breath
for heaven surely was not for flesh
but when he saw us, how he smiled
to see his image thus by love fulfilled!

Kevin Straw

we stood one day upon the sands...

we stood one day upon the sands
and saw the ocean gather and depart
believed we could stretch out our hands
and make the sea obey the heart

the seagulls shrieked derisive screams
the world rolled round in spite of love
yet we were stronger for our dreams
- to have faith sometimes is enough

Kevin Straw

we took some flowers to a cemetery...

we took some flowers to a cemetery
and made a vow to love till death.
we even claimed in sacred ceremony
to be as one till our last breath.

but all affection, custom, ceremony
by which we claimed unnatural powers,
have turned to stone words in a cemetery
and died like offerings of flowers.

it's true i could, you couldn't, love till death,
and that i painfully accept.
but somehow more profoundly i regret
the words that need not have been said.

Kevin Straw

we walked the park...

we walked the park in a winter breeze
among the shameless nakedness of trees
and saw some seagulls exiled from the sea
beneath the pale-eyed sun on you and me

it was as though the world were slowing under
our in-step feet, our full-of-wonder,
and hand in frozen hand we trod
a frosted cake of ice -green sod

a cat arched whining by our side
a bird set off a small snow-slide
and then despite the cold and lonely weather
we joined our trembling lips together

and knew the next spring had been won
by the warmth deep in us, thus begun

Kevin Straw

we will walk naked in the empty night

sometimes life rocks upon one second
and finds a point from which to move the earth
then never again can the heart's place be reckoned
when time and space give life, death and birth

we are not re-born but re-made from nothing
a genesis of dust that makes a universe
and of the old we thought a special something
the good and bad now seem an empty curse

you and i shall be eternal orbiters
over new shores of the new seas of new land
and nothing before shall be our arbiters
for what will matter is the touch of hand

we will walk naked in the empty night
brushing away the stars like sand
our eyes, our lips, will be the start of light
the one and only thing we understand

Kevin Straw

we work it out and still we suffer

we work it out and still we suffer
a formula and still the pain
we edge the rat into the gutter
and in the dark it breeds again

love seems at first to solve the matter
or hate, indifference or two-way pain
then time moves on, puts up its shutter
and we are in the dark again

then live with this live with this clutter
of deadly love and lively pain
it is the word god made us stutter
who will not speak to us again

Kevin Straw

were my heart torn to let you go

were my heart torn to let you go
i think i would part you from me
if in my pain by doing so
you would be better being free

this is the first time i have known
a love which grows by setting free
which i do not entrap or own
but like earth/moon pulls equally

i see now love is here and there
and in between clear space
and it's that distance in which care
achieves its best embrace

Kevin Straw

what can a million books preach to me now...

what can a million books preach to me now
that isn't in the smooth curve of your brow?
our eyes tell, hands contain, more knowing
than all the world knows coming going

they that say flesh is itself a wrong
should listen to its silent and all-knowing song
- the hand that shapes itself unto the breast
knows all; but more: it is a universe of rest

Kevin Straw

what does it matter if it's true...

what does it matter if it's true
that in the heart of man
belief stabs through and through
until the brain can't think?

what does it matter if i love you
as doubtless as i can
and belief makes thought untrue
like a squid's black ink?

let me be dead before i see
my heart killed by a mind set free

Kevin Straw

what failed to make the moon a star

what failed to make the moon a star
to make me be in love as you now are
is deep in time before big bang
before the universe began

if i could go back myriad years
to dry for you this evening's tears
i would fly bravely like a hero
from rich infinity to pointless zero

but even then what could i do
to make me fall in love with you?
if you are victim, so am i
in birth, in life and till we die

the love i do not have for you
began before the universe was due

Kevin Straw

what is the difference between your corpse and you...

what is the difference between your corpse and you
here in my arms the whole night through?
is it your eyes your lips your breasts
to which my aching body clings and rests?

is it your voice so clear and touching
your hands so undeniably caressing?
or your sweet silky stunning hair
that makes me wonder what you are?

is this a kind of dress i hold to me
beneath which lies your bright reality?
do i hold something beyond which you
are untouched and yet wholly true?

Kevin Straw

what is this kiss that starts at three...

what is this kiss that starts at three
then ends when we awake at seven
where do we go just you and me
for four hours, is it heaven?

where does the globe go when we grow
to one in one another's eyes?
and then from one to seeming none
- how can lips so surprise?

perhaps it could be understood
if we woke up in bed
but at the moment it's so good
we hold and kiss instead.

Kevin Straw

what the hell!

i know that "what the hell! " today
means some day there'll be hell to pay
but till what goes around comes by
i'll be a-flying in the sky!

but if i say "be careful there! "
from plain good sense or simple fear
yes life will go on safe and sound
but i'll be walking on the ground!

Kevin Straw

what was the daybreak doing...

what was the daybreak doing
showing your unconcerned face
and your packing and to-ing and fro-ing
as you ruthlessly filled your case?

i could not believe that the morning
would not show a sign of your grief
in a room that was full of the dawning
dark of my shattered belief

it seemed it was i who was dying
and you were a flower in the room
and the morning so cold to my crying
was warming and making you bloom

Kevin Straw

what we won't do for the sexual thrill!

what we won't do for the sexual thrill!
we'll do adultery and even kill
for a pretty face, a naked thigh
- we'll even make our children cry

we'll lie and cheat and worm around
our moral standards when we've found
the eyes or lips or breasts that fill
our longing for a quick cheap thrill

don't be mistaken, this writer has
gone down this dark and dangerous path
all i say is never say "till death"
if you deny it as you breathe the breath

Kevin Straw

when i am slave...

when i am slave to jewels of your hair
the pearl and ivory of breasts and skin
i can forget beneath these you are there
and that your soul craves love therein

when eyes are only blank sky-blue
and lips red like the heartless rose
then i'm in love with just the picture you
a beauty that is sugar gloze

but when you weep and in your tears i see
your unfulfilled and needy soul
then love sets free the slave to jewels in me
and i love you complete and whole

Kevin Straw

when nights are broken by your broken heart

when nights are broken by your broken heart
and in the jagged mirrors of past time are shown
her phantom body and her ghostly lips
as though the present by the past is overgrown

and when day disappears in memory
and you see nothing but her eyes and face
and so you walk and talk unthinkingly
a ghost held in her firm embrace

then fence a little piece of you from grief
and walk there daily in its cool calm ways
stay there each day a little longer for relief
and time will give you back your nights and days

Kevin Straw

when we could see a million pieces of the universe

when we could see a million pieces of the universe
like diamonds on the breast of night
the sun and moon as clear as golden lights
hang like bright fruits upon the tree of life

when we could look into the cloud and see
god sat upon his crystal throne
then love was possible for you and me
for it was with the absolute as one

but then the mists of time and space
hid the green valley of our dreams
and hate's volcanic and entire embrace
split good from bad, ripped hate from love

we have decided against paradise
preferring loneliness, the haunt of lies

Kevin Straw

which of us has joined the dead?

which of us has joined the dead?
which is full-fleshed this night?
your memory stirs my heart and head
till i'm your mirror, you my light

my memory is like this rose
that sparks up from the moonlit earth
and i am dark and faint with those
dead in love's buried previous birth

love came and took my life from me
till i was nothing and my loved one all
her flesh and blood have buried me
made me beyond my mind's recall

i live as though upon the stage
my own life paid-for dance and song
the red rose and the earth now rage
because i loved too well too long

Kevin Straw

who loves for love's own sake

who loves for love's own sake
is riding for a fall
for time's two hands will surely break
the love that calls love all

so you who give your heart complete
and wager your love's all
will suffer some day cruel defeat
bleak winter from hard fall

but better that than those who trade
too much for just enough
who free-wheel to a safe old age
not knowing perfect love

Kevin Straw

who put the fall in fall in love

who put the fall in fall in love
the notion that to love is sin
that that which nature gave to us
is less than wholly good within?

are we not made from time's first day
to put love first of all the good
that haltingly may come our way
to hail this gift of blood?

how can this climax of the flesh
be after seen as something vile
as though blame could be made for breath
or eyes be cursed for opening wide?

love makes the present, future, and the past
it is the first, the in between, and last

Kevin Straw

why can't i go through words to what they mean

why can't i go through words to what they mean
like some sharp arrow pierce the screen
that separates the sound from the wild cry
that echoes from the earth to sky?

why cannot i decipher feeling
in words that breaks mind's fragile ceiling
and make in the eternal air
the thing i want to say right there?

why can't i mouth into your heart
the certain truth that would quite tear apart
the veil that life from death divides
and rip it from its falsehood open wide?

Kevin Straw

why does your body make me die...

why does your body make me die
when i remember it
i had thought love a thing on high
- that flesh was part of, but not it

but that one measured touch
upon your flesh one moonlit eve
now gone is yet my love
and makes me of myself bereave

all thought all feeling all virtue
are nothing to this touch of you
those millimetres lost in space
are all my heart, my mind, my face

Kevin Straw

world without end they pray...

world without end they pray
as though words spin the world around
but nothing we can do or say
will quicken it or slow it down
or keep it going on the day
the sun burns all its green to brown

to think that we can live by notion
is like a ship's crew thinks it works the ocean

Kevin Straw

you are dirty and you are foul

you are dirty and you are foul
yet for your love my clean lips howl
i have gone by, left you for dead,
and yet your eyes stay in my head

your darkness like a dark red fruit
tempts me from paradise to sin
i know the juice my teeth will shoot
lies sweet beneath your soft ripe skin

if i were not so sure and right
i'd walk out in your dangerous night
and see the wild woods and the cold white stars,
and dare the claws, the bloody scars

Kevin Straw

you came into my house and fought...

you came into my house and fought
to change it to the thing you sought
you shouldered in with rule and saw
and rectified the smallest flaw.

what you disliked that would not change
you painted over from your range
the small or large you thought too much
you re-sized with a look or touch

and i had nowhere else to put myself
except with other trophies on the shelf

Kevin Straw

you covered me like snow the earth

you covered me like snow the earth
till i was nearly dead by dearth
i could not move beneath your weight
of love disguised as gentle hate

it seemed at first our love was light
though sun and moon were out of sight
and then the snow fell from your height
to cover me and blind and blight

but as i stare into your white
i know snow can't outlast the light

Kevin Straw

you have to have a place that's yours

you have to have a place that's yours
separate from your most loved one
where you can go with any of life's sores
to heal your soul in your own sun

without this part that's yours alone
you'll never love completely
to give yourself away you must
make secret some of you discretely

Kevin Straw

you say i'm good enough to eat for you...

you say i'm good enough to eat for you
but you just swallow whole not chew!
i baste myself with perfumes sweet
and regulate my body heat
and you get me upon a plate
but do you love or do your hate?

and down i go, in one great swallow,
as tho' i'm nothing and you hollow
and tough or tender, lean or fat,
(i wish you wouldn't wear your hat!)
it's all the same upon your tongue
(oh god that slurpy slappy song!)

can't you eat me as i do you
with manners and a thought or two?

Kevin Straw

you smiled a camera flash...

you smiled a camera flash
and i resisted you in vain
i held all day the photograph
behind my eyes deep in my brain

how is it beauty passes through
the flesh and bone and mental too
and that a thing of merest shadow
becomes an icon for the real you?

oh i was foolish to pursue
the human of this spirit shade
and think that when i fingered you
i'd find in fact your ghost was laid

Kevin Straw

you taught me slime and soul are one

you taught me slime and soul are one
bred by the searching forever sun
the same beating heart beats all differences on
the earth's core to the sky makes the universe one

the owl and the mouse shriek together at night
and there is the heart of the darkness of light
from my crumb of the earth i gaze at night's dome
amazed that the stars form the roof to my home

i am of all and all's part of me
invisible salt lost and found in the sea
and love knows no bounds and no free
but is the infinite one you and me

Kevin Straw

you tempted me from hell to paradise

you tempted me from hell to paradise
from burning all the day and night
to flowers and rills and peacock's cries
from being nothing in my lonely light

i felt the magnet of your flesh and soul
like earth might falling for the sun
the chance to make this ragged whole
to end this roadway of just begun

you licensed me to live my hour
more rich than i thought it could be
you were the astounding flower
that would receive the humble bee

and yet against all reason and all love
i thought hell punishment/reward enough

Kevin Straw

you were my easter lily and my christmas rose

you were my easter lily and my christmas rose
my primrose path and first and final garden
i lived in heaven in your eyes and smile
you gave my life an unconditional pardon

time imitated for a while eternity
the sun rose on the first dawn every day
you touched me and from self saved me
you were my life my truth my way

we lived an attic life inside an attic room
that stopped in heaven while the world turned on
as though we'd stepped out from a stoneless tomb
and love itself alone forever would burn on

then sudden silent unseen shifts of heart
that like tectonic waves collapse a town
crept up on us and shuddered us apart
and brutally our towering love crashed down

Kevin Straw

you'll be my heaven ...

you'll be my heaven, my long-lost angel,
when god decides to raise the dead
and we lie down in our old passion
and hope he cannot find our bed!

the radio again will choir our story
and curtains hide the worldly street
soft sheets once more make clouds of glory
but this time, time won't sour the sweet

Kevin Straw

you've wept yourself into my heart...

you've wept yourself into my heart
too many times to trust your tears
when i am hurt and want to part
you overcome with tears my tears

but when i've fooled myself to feign
that such a foolish love could make it
and when the circle's made again
you always seek a way to break it

love that cannot go or stay
gives off an acid tear each way
and every time it breaks or mends
a part of what it's made of ends

you're not strong enough to hate or love
and i'm too weak to say "enough"

Kevin Straw

your shade is now the world to me

your shade is now the world to me
that haunts my waking and my memory
all else is nothing but a shadow play
beside the shadow of your face today

a ghost has risen and replaced the flesh
the blood the bones and every breath
of every woman, man and thing i see
for your shade's now the world to me

how can the bricks and mortar of time/space
beside the memory of your embrace
be things a wind would blow away
yet in a hurricane you still would stay?

and i would join you in your ghastly state
that's more to me than any fate
but i'm a coward who daren't be free
and so this shadow world keeps you from me

Kevin Straw