Poetry Series

Kevin Straw

- 306 poems -

Publication Date:

July 2012

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

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

Kevin Straw

a love i knew...

a love i knew made night
rise smiling with the day
it was slow stars still light
a moving and eternal way

it locked me in so tight
it kept life in its breath
now there's no day or night
i'm memory then death

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

all you who weep and turn at night

all you who weep and turn at night
that love was flower but now is blight
all you who cannot see the day
because your love has gone away

take just one moment from your pain
to know that love will come again
that all these tears are cleansing streams
to sweep away your thwarted dreams

and that which darkens now your heart
is prelude to a bright and morning start

Kevin Straw

an amateur of life

who will love me when my day
flees like a film on fire away?
when all the stars and extras rise
to quit my filming-over eyes?

none, for i have never shown
the stellar brightness others own
to make the world look up in awe
and judge my act with its applause

i've been an amateur of life
of love of thought of worldly strife
and therefore clumsy in my scene
not worth being heard again or seen

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 red rose
no better in a verse than prose

what can i write that can more please
than nerves that wordless speak my flesh
and dot the eyes and cross the tease
put out the tongue, and blow my breath?

and yet and yet you can abstract
some meaning from this concrete act

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 i quit this paradise

before i quit this paradise
of feeling that you love me
at least please cover up your lies
and hide the truth by touching me

let me in this unseeing night
feel that i see love here
and that i'll never see the light
see in the sight i fear

then i'll take morning after all
for this forgetting night
and care not if i shall recall
the silent empty light

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 humanity

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 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 lady next to me
and knew i was a dead man
within her eyes the death of me
as in a snake’s eyes shone

she stared at something out of sight
her black hair curled around my wrist
her body’s statue, deathly white,
moved only when 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 each kiss my love diminishes

between each kiss my love diminishes
until to bear your body by my side
i learn to kiss till my hate finishes
and i love what we do and we have died

inducing beauty in a hateful night
is no mean trick for one whose proper trade
is following his instinct in the light
and then forgetting love when it is made

but i believe unwonted labouring
and strife for dazzling pleasure at the least
will light someday the wild lands neighbouring
these walls I build like any burden beast

then if omission of my heat offends
believe it is hate's death my heart intends.

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

Bhopal

how can i think this music perfect
when there's blood and pain in the broken world?
is there in my soul a defect
when children die before they are uncurled?

do i in relishing this noise
tread on the limbs and faces of the dying
have i a right to a moral poise
when i hear this music vie with orphans crying?

what absolution can soul bring
to the absolutes of pestilence and hunger
as i listen to a tenor sing
and sit and smile who should be full of anger?

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

call out the dredger for my heart

call out the dredger for my heart
beneath a silt of sexual 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 walked through public ways
my dripping heart within her hand
and thrown it in a deep wide stream
to sink into a depthless sand

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

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

Charlotte Moore

Charlotte Moore is no more
she died in nineteen twenty
she gave her life to the factory floor
and died a pauper in a land of plenty

she worked to starve from dark to dark
went home too weary to rebel
she paid a rent for a stinking slum
that paved the landlord's road to hell

she had a child by a supervisor
was sacked because he took his pleasure
to pay her way she walked the night
for useless gentlemen of leisure

the child was born but soon took ill
and died for little could she do
she laid it on her bed, turned on the gas,
and lying by her child died too

too many Charlotte Moores still die
to feed the few with wealth and glory
the few who steal away their pride
who coldly write their tragic story

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 weary 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 sensual ocean dry in one heart beat?
this mental sun switch off like a light?
- can these vanish forever with bone, flesh and blood-heat
and the bright daily world forever be night?

how can this hard world dissolve on my death
this sun and this rain by my death cease to be
that forever have given the earth its bright breath
and from the beginning began to make me?

i laugh at the thought of myself ever dying
so real and unbreakable this life seems to be
i understand those i see frightened or crying
but i 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 in my bed this morning

creatures in my bed this morning
animals in human sheets
we are in our love's cage, mourning
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?

and yet as my hand makes you move
i resurrect the angel of our 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,
are used to guard that frightened part

then those for whom the feelings are
a castle that divides in two
cannot complain if neither care
if pitilessly false or true

they try to rule from mind not heart
their eyes are calculating tools
for thought is after-thought for love
that builds a soft nest for its 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

dead but not forgotten

it’s odd that i alive want when i’m dead
someone to weep and grieve over my head
though now i live alone and shun the love
of those below and specially above

and yet it pleases me to think that i
will meet the unknown known when i shall die
someone to oversee my corpse from bed to grave
or see my flesh aflame and yet be brave

i who have lived for no one else but me
still want when dead another still to see
that i go not unnoticed from my death to where
no one can touch me in the absolute elsewhere

Kevin Straw

death is good to give us nothingness

death is good to give us nothingness
to drown us in the arms of darkness
to take all mirrors (in and out) away
and make the night outlast the tiring day

how good death is to never say
what tomorrow should be from today
and put us quite outside the time and space
that drove us at such maddening pace

Kevin Straw

death makes its numbers less than nothing

death makes its numbers less than nothing
worlds upon worlds have found a spaceless tomb
no one however powerful has ever taken
the least thing to that less than empty room

this countless ant hill of the teeming earth
is less than nought in death's oblivious face
the first dark scum to the last bright dearth
we cannot measure now in time and space

all thoughts, all feelings, smiles and voices
fade into nothing in death's nerveless grave
the greatest and the smallest deeds are nothing
the lowest coward is now the highest brave

so this is all, this day beneath the sun
only in memory will our nothing still be one

Kevin Straw

death's door

give me the key that will set me free
life, once my love, is my enemy
i cannot live but life tortures me
time is the tool of its cruelty

death which was furthest on earth from me
is now in the room that is nearest to me
it waits with nothing to comfort me
and nothing is now what I wish for me

give up your strongest love for me
give me the key that will set me free

Kevin Straw

death's not the great divide we fear

death's not the great divide we fear
forever and forever we are here
in children's or in lovers' eyes
we are their laughter and their sighs

the least of us has built a hall
in which is laid out our best all
and all the world will feast therein
whether we lived in virtue or in sin

in every eye, mouth, hand or tongue
in old or middle-aged or young
there will be part of us that lives
a gift that nature generously gives

run, run, into the dark of death
and live in the next look and breath!

Kevin Straw

do not still love me when i am dead

do not still love me when i am dead
but shine your love's light on a living head
and just as in my life you graced my soul
so make his heart and mind a living whole
let my most valuable bequest
be that your love lives in a living breast

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

for some of us death is alive

for some of us death is alive
day after day his shade is grey to black
he is a kind of cast-off lover
who desperately wants us back

his cunning is to promise: 'come with me
and i will make the harsh world less'
as though there's somewhere else to live
beyond this world's unhappiness

and some of us death can seduce
who fling themselves into his arms
but his love is oblivion not rest
- fight for your life against his charms!

Kevin Straw

forgiveness

forgiveness 1

why were our tears not stained with blood
that flowed when love was torn apart?
how could they shine so crystal clear
their source a wrecked and grieving heart?

these were the clear streams of regret
that cool and heal the wounds we bear
that can revive a love that is not yet
beyond forgiveness to repair?

forgiveness 2

how is it one can live long years till dead
and still not say the words that should be said?
and still not reach a hand across the room
until that hand too late is captive in a tomb?

sometimes an impulse lifts us to our feet
and nearly forces us to walk and meet
those whom we ought to love, did we not fear
to leave hate's fortress for love's open air

to stop the longing heart and ready breath
is to be living in a kind of death

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

from formal day grew formal night

from formal day grew formal night
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
where once we rocked and rolled without the law
we heed the chalk on a hard dance floor

Kevin Straw

fuse smile with cry

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

heaven still knows hell
is close and can’t forget it
but so does hell know 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

good things come from a pool that's stinking

good things come from a pool that's stinking
out of decaying flesh a honey may be made
and clouds are glorified by the sun's slow sinking
and memories gilded as the remembered fade

the lowest life may yield some higher good
and by a singularity light generated
and in the tangled terror of a wood
by single beams of light life is created

we divide the world too much by thought
'this is and this is not' is our divisive measure
as though morality were a stone-walled fort
and black pain not a shade in a roseate pleasure

this i think of when i remember you
that i was mathematically true

Kevin Straw

grace

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

your lips are burning in 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 holds it back from 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 we not thought our love a crime

had we not thought our love a crime
we would have had more space and time
to change a sin to virtue, 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 God’s guarding angels
stopped us rebuilding paradise
by virtue barring all the angles
by precept changing life to 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
and we are no more than the flowers

what is there more than touching you
but death?

Kevin Straw

here's a tiny thing that's true:

here's a tiny thing that's true:
the argument of touch
can never falsify
the me and you

the reaches of the universe
we'll never journey to
for what is more
than me and you

our lips joined in a kiss
are two halves of the universe
for what's the one that's all
but me and you

Kevin Straw

his tiny fingers tap a keyboard

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

life 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

holy is this evening made...

holy is this evening made
by your body on my bed
your beauty makes a little shade
of heaven for 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 eyes live in your light
my body's still, in case i waken

Kevin Straw

how are my dreams now flesh

how are my dreams now flesh
my dry desires now rain?
how is the hard world made
of pleasure and no pain?

how is my life now gold
a statue like a god?
how am i young not old
and even where once odd?

how is the smallest part
of my stray finger blessed?
that it can thrill me through
then give me deepest rest?

what has transformed this night
but hair so black, but skin so white?

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?

i feel you now soft in your dress
and hear it slipping to the ground
and still that thunderous 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

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
and when i think i have the map of you
you change and i stay lost in you

Kevin Straw

how can the skin make one of two?

how can the skin make one of two?
how can the arms hold love together?
how can a kissed mouth keep its word
of love that should have been forever?

how can the longing eye see soul
beyond the object of desire?
how can the mind make lovers whole
that burns to ashes in love's fire?

how can one moment's ecstasy
fill years of emptiness till death?
how can love pledge eternity
that's made with one night's breath?

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 fought the battle truth and lie
yet 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 at war with light

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

Kevin Straw

how can this millimetre touch

how can this millimetre touch
black out the bright sunlight?
how can this little be so much
that nothing else is in my sight?

i am a monarch happy with a sphere
no bigger than your arms' embrace
whose past and future locked in here
makes me the lord of time and space

all's dark in me, save i'm aware
your eye is all my endless sky
and in the gleam of your black hair
is my life like time's sea now passing by

Kevin Straw

how is it i still feel your skin...

how is it i still feel your skin
these forty years beyond our pain?
still have your body here within
your lips soft on my own again?

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

why is it 'that' is more than 'this'
that real, this film of nothingness?
that good earth, this abyss
of endless lack of tenderness?

my breath comes quicker as i feel
in memory your presence warm and soft
the world that rolls me on it now
has not since then been quick 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 sun shot straight from you to 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
the light became a dark embrace

for we were hoodwinked by the light
that took away our second sight

Kevin Straw

how is it that my perfect love...

how is it that my perfect love
is always holding someone else's hand
why is the thing for which I lust
forever in a window on a stand!

why do the longed-for things I buy
within life's dark seductive store
become imperfect in the light
and suddenly i long no more

why did you build a universe
of perfect love for me
that turned into a pyramid
and in the darkness buried me

some people seem to turn the world
i feel the world turns me!

Kevin Straw

how many of their dead do people know?

how many of their dead do people know
the ones from whom their lives now flow?
how far in time past can they go
to trace the faces from which their faces grow?

how many people know they need
the dead from which the living breed?
for it’s a fatal kind of greed
to cut the flower off from its seed

the home of life is an ancestral home
shade upon shade that forms the life to come

Kevin Straw

how many parts of love to hate

how many parts of love to hate
in the average human blood
what percent forgiveness
in the suspension of its good

how much pain can we forebear to give
in the surgery of desire
how much wreckage can we make
in the nagasaki of hate's fire

what alien could read our history
and not recoil in dread
that one small species could have made
so many suffer and so many dead

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
and for this gentle rack 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, 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
the three dimensions in my head
insisting it is really love?

Kevin Straw

how much talk can talk-up love?

how much talk can talk-up love?
what phrase can phase the heart?
how many lines will be enough
to bind two lovers that might part?

we talk, and talk, and talk again
but words can't heal the scar
or conversation ease the pain
of finding what and who we are?

so it must be a kiss or touch
the silence of forgiving arms
speech therapy is not enough
for dumb hate's deepest harms?

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 steepling 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
each endlessly the 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
thatï¿½s 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 mind kicks in
with: “pleasure’s not enough”
i make a loud unholy din:
- for a mindful monkey, life is tough!

Kevin Straw

i am slave, and you are free

how is it that your face 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 substance to compare
how much like you 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 shan’t forget the trustful bird
that flew from your wide open eyes
to hide in the forgetting skies

no smiles could lure it back again
no promises redeem that pain
oh what if i'd not said that word!
(but 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 ago this day
when i looked at your smooth white 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
on which i try to pen my love
because i know that ink's a cage
that cannot catch her smell and touch

what can we say of life and love
that's ever true the way we tell
we really hug and kiss and touch
but writing‘s just an empty spell

to show red life on this pale face
with black ink is for God to do
- and if he did write your embrace
i'd burn the page to feel the real 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 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 fooled of happiness by flesh

i have been fooled of happiness by flesh
cheated of my life by her sweet breath
she put her arms around me and i gave
my living body to a living grave

i flew towards her light and as i flew
the sky, once sunlit, darker grew
i sought the safety of her house of light
but then her hard eyes stopped my flight

upon the garden of her love i fed
and feeding fainted as though starving dead
she showed my wanting, my deep desire,
and, showing, put my blood to fire

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'm asleep in heart and head
careless if the sun or 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 the storm and stress of strife
is now hard diamonded night

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

Kevin Straw

i have consigned your flesh to darkness

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/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 grasp the green tree and 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: forgotten memory

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
become engaged in love and strife
beyond the dreams of yesterday

now sunlight greens the easy trees
the flowers are growing 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 years
as though the heavy world turns back
and buries its quick flowers in tears

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 loved sadly, hated gladly

i have loved sadly, hated gladly
destroyed/created on my bed
known how to do both goodly/badly
with stark polarities in my head

i once knew pure simplicity
when i was lying by your side
hands clasped in the felicity
of one who knew that he had died

love came like caesar to my fort
for my surrender or my life
and i not brave enough to live, then thought
and gave in to the fear of strife

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 hate
and left my blood to form like ice

i am too olded now to care
the wire that hummed with heat is cold
i have had friend and whore and wife
now hotly bought is coldly sold

i watch the bright electric young
write love on sky like neon signs
and useless in the dark now hang,
save for the rare spark of these lines

Kevin Straw

i joy in Spring's excess of beauty

i joy in Spring's excess of beauty
and feel what it is like to live
without regret or shame or duty
a beast that's free to get and give

these bright hypnotic blooms i'm seeing
make senses live, make thought go dead
and once more i'm an ancient being
that's neither from the heart nor head

but what is this that comes to me
and breaks this visionary spell?
- if i am that i have to be
am i not natural as well?

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 love 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 loved before your eyes were blue

i loved before your eyes were blue
before the black silk 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 made you of myself till i was soul

i made you of myself till i was soul
and love was light and air about your flesh
and i was made, by being nothing, whole
not driven by a heart nor by a breath

and i was love when it is sun on earth
that shows all though itself unseen
and yet mysteriously gives all its birth
its deepest nature and its surface sheen

but how this shining sun grew red
and drew you in and swallowed whole
that which it gave its heart and head
that which it thought a creature to its soul!

Kevin Straw

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 Godï¿½s 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

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 should have sucked life from her lips

i should have sucked life from her lips
i should have given life to her hips
i should have known that her black hair
was evidence that love was there

i should have drawn the curtains wide
and let the world's eye see inside
the little cell which held the sun
despite the judgment that it won

i should have in the moment of her look
directed my love by its book
and made a life without a lie
not this bad fiction she and i

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

so 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 still can follow by my fingers...

i still can follow by my fingers
your hair down to your pretty feet
though all i have’s your shade that lingers
from long ago's delightful heat?

where in me is your silky skin
your slender hands, your pink-nailed toes
- the architecture that goes out and in
- the shapely chimney of your nose?

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

then how can i some other lover find
with you so adamant in my mind?

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 new belief
then all at once i see my pet
she'd only gone out for a cigarette!

Kevin Straw

i want to be a soldier at my death

i want to be a soldier at my death
i want to blow him up with my last breath
i want to catch him in my arms and break his back
i want to hear me laughing as i hear him crack
i want to know the irony of defeating him
- my song of victory his triumphant hymn

Kevin Straw

i watch you briefly hesitate

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

i guess that you will come to me
your nakedness is proof
but this small moment makes me see
your heart still stays 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 painful 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 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 can i dream you now
more real than this bright screen
on which i try to find out how
the real is shadow, shadow dream

tell them that think the mind knows all
the vital things it never can recall

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
to be my eve in my lost 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 just emptiness till death
of taken and exhausted breath

Kevin Straw

i wish i were that owl

i wish i were that owl
hunting in the night
alone yet answering to
the call of nature’s light

a tiny cog of flesh and blood
within the great machine;
that knows not ever bad nor good
is never in between

oh to have those eyes sharp bright
the concentrated brain
that knows just one thing in the night
not pleasure nor of pain

but is the empty and the endless now
the never-moving and yet seeding plough

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 haven 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 would have chased love through the jungle

i would have chased love through the jungle
like a hamster after a tiger
i would have jumped from the empire building
to land on love's feet

i would have learnt the Bible and the Koran
if love could be the two times table
i would have walked naked all summer in the desert
for a thimble of water in love's oasis

i would have left the world in a one-way rocket
with a day's air and a picnic basket
for the promise of a moment in the heaven
of your embraces

i would have stood an inch from the sun
till my eyes were burnt out with desire
and put my hand in its core
for a nanosecond of your fire

now?
i would not get out of bed
i would not even turn my head!

Kevin Straw

i would have liked not to be here

i would have liked not to be here
nor seen the sky nor breathed the air
i would have much preferred
not to have been one who occurred

i would have liked a changeless night
the absence of disturbing light
i would have been enchanted to
not ever know the false or true

i would have liked to never grow
to never come and never go
to be a nothing less than nought
and never found for never sought

i would have liked to nothing love
to never feel below or think above
to be where i was meant to be
deep in oblivion’s changeless sea

Kevin Straw

i'd write about daffodils if i knew what one looked like

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

oh so many eyes so glassy and blank
watching the clouds without knowing they pass by
home to bright birds, then turning their lights on
show themselves up with a fixed empty glare

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
iï¿½d write about daffodils if i knew what one looked like

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 lives again to move
the self away that love may come

Kevin Straw

if there were such a thing as truth

if there were such a thing as truth
i would have found it when
in childhood or in youth
life was not bent with pain

or even in crabbed age
i would have glimpsed it purely
even through the bouts of rage
the cynical, the surly

i know it in philosophy
i know its abstract worth
but maybe it is not in me
the earth from which the gold comes forth

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

then let the bits fall where they may
begin to start to walk away
your memory unasked 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 thoughts and kisses aren't enough
where light can never know 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 face 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

if you have nets can hold the night

if you have nets can hold the night
or traps in which the dawn can fall
come now before the tyrant light
demands we dress in harsh day's hall

if you can hold the stars in place
and have the strength to stay the moon
then keep us darkly face to face
lest love should fail if shown too soon

and stay this loving midnight hour
an ageless age of love's blind touch
for day might kill this fading flower
if we could see ourselves too much

Kevin Straw

if you will love then so will i

if you will love then so will i
what does it matter if the world goes by
and holds its nose at you and i

ours is a life worth all the jeers
ours this moment in all our years
which can give us three rousing cheers

than hold my hand to dare this dark ravine
and take this frail bridge to the unseen
the from-what-must-be to what-has-been

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 ï¿½enoughï¿½
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 love i think she owes to me

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 see 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

in this one finger, here in the night

in this one finger, here in the night
this small nerve ending and beginning me
in 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
and we are no more than the flowers

what is there more than touching you
but death?

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 would be nice to see bright angels

it would be nice
to see bright angels, hear their voices,
know at last an unfeigned smile
and know tho' dead someone rejoices
and welcomes home this weary child

but that's too easy to believe
- the stark reality's that life
will shudder on till death relieves
it from times indecisive knife

i have been where the trees are black
scarce seen within the smallest moon
and where the hunter/hunted never slack
and kill and die by nature's boon

so death i know will seek me out
and cover me forever with his hood
and if i pray or weep and shout
there'll be no angels in this wood

Kevin Straw

it's easy to think that dreams are real

it's easy to think that dreams are real
that error's what we see and feel
that there's a place above beyond
that is the better, the perfect land

what calls us is the fear
inseparable from being here
the dark and dreadful earth
our painful and imperfect birth

yet come here and be quiet with me
look through the darkness at the sun and sea
the loving that makes life
the days, nights, years that have no strife

shall we exchange this heaven here
for one which is escape from fear?
shall we believe a dream because one day
the life we loved will ebb away?

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

it's sweet to dream an easy heaven

it's sweet to dream an easy heaven
where all's predictable and even
for life that gives us so much pleasure
gives also sadness at its leisure

for every day's a chance to die
and every truth may be a lie
and every way is fraught with danger
and every life at risk from anger

but shall we wager hell/heaven here
for one which is escape from fear?
believe because we hope one day
this love/hate life will go away?

hell's other folk, but so is heaven
without the rough there is no even
fight the good fight and fill the earth
with how you faced life, death and birth

and scorn the coward's mythic story
of a coward's easy glory

Kevin Straw

i've lived on sand for most my years

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

i've preached love to the unconverted

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

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

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

the world was 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

keep part of you a part that's yours

keep part of you a part that's yours
a part apart from everyone
to heal the wounds and salve the sores
to solve the puzzled soul again

without this place that's yours alone
you'll never live complete
you must have this your very own
a secret part, a part discrete

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

(note: some say Henry II crawled on his knees into Canterbury Cathedral in penance for the murder of Thomas a Becket)

Kevin Straw

let the past bury the past unless it's green

let the past bury the past unless it's green
let time dissolve the decadent and dead
let go forever the pointless might-have-been
and errors that still make you bow your head

switch off the camera that screens
those acts which can't be rectified
and all those abstract grief-filled scenes
that make you cry as first you cried

but take with you into the day
the past that still has sap and flowers
the memories that make you smile and say
'these were and are my richest hours'

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

life's flowering

the flower only hangs about
until its season is all out
but we go on and on and on
despite the fact our time is done

there is a time to seize the day
to do the deed and say the say
to be a villain or a hero
to be of worth or even zero

but when we start to shrink and shrivel
and moan and whinge and whine and drivel
that we ain't what we used to be
(yet clutch at life relentlessly)

then is the moment gun or knife
would gladly rid us of our life
but few of us would be so brave
to change this grave for a timeless grave

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 within a single tomb

how can ten seconds' conversation
convert the body to a shade?
there was the sunlight on the window
we know not now how light was made

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

a neighbour far away plays chopin
of love and war - so unafraid!
we, the defeated, flee the music
of holy promises we made

we are the undead of our love
like seeds in earth that has no future
like words, then life now acid rain,
that blight the very root of nature

Kevin Straw

little baby in my arms tonight

little baby in my arms tonight
cry as if your world were ending
though your eyes will see the light
after mine are long past mending

i shall vanish from your sight
yet i will still be here with you
for in your heart there is a light
to which i gave a flame or two

and so i hold you in my arms
as much for my sake as for yours
love is a shield for all alarms
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
for love, a falling tree that killed,
had buds that sprung in hopeful May

love took me to its darkened room
with promises of heavenly things
but four walls made a deathly tomb
and stopped the hymns an angel sings

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 dies a little every day

love dies a little every day
slow like an hour hand
till suddenly surprised we say
‘let go my hateful hand’

the tide has passed its utmost high
the sun’s not right above
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 enables right to rise

love enables right to rise
equality to gain its apogee
it sets the heart right, clears the eye
so we each other clearly see

love returns the voice of birds
when the deafening war is over
and gives peace its rightful words
to turn the hater to a lover

love is more than storm in blood
more than fire in lustful eye
it is the satellite of good
that guides us from a constant sky

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 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 petrifaction 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 heartbeat not violins

love is a heartbeat not violins
it is a virtue that can't be told from sins
it is the darkest place in the brightest sun
a point where all is lost and won

it is the rapture of day, the rest of night,
a blind look into a perfect light
it is the sum of touch, taste, sight and smell
deaf to the heavens, careless of hell

love is a memory when it's most near
a beacon of hope that signals fear
it is a dress in a breeze that folds
the heart in desire that sees its moulds

love is infinity, and the start
of the confinement of the captured heart

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
love still a lamb and jaguar

Kevin Straw

love like a butchered lamb...

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

i look at us still deep in love
remember deeper days of hate
which wounded love to seeming death
killed love new risen now by faith

Kevin Straw

love once ate me alive

love once ate me alive
leapt out of its swamp
dragged me to my death

yet i could hear and see
was happy in its teeth
with being out of breath

i ran from the jungle
but think i made a bungle
for i remember with a smile
my moments with that crocodile

Kevin Straw

love would have changed my leaden life to gold

love would have turned my leaden life to gold
it would have made me young now i am old

it would have changed my badger life
for the eagle’s eyrie and his noble strife

it would have seen my journey to the grave
not trembling pale but smiling brave

it would have been the rain that fell
and made a meadow of this desert hell

except i hardened me to die
without love, knowing it’s a lie

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 mustard seeds
and in the damned unwanted weeds

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 lonely star, the dearest 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 fragments from war-weary birds

and 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 roughly 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

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 innocent green shoot 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! ”

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 overnight 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
that trees have no morality
the mother-tree cannot do wrong:
canï¿½t 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

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

you can get loyalty on your own
and find a comrade in your hand
no other love will not disown,
if not in flesh, in mind disband

Kevin Straw

my fall was in the fall of your dark hair

my fall was in the fall of your dark hair
my rise the whiteness of your flesh
my heaven within your blessing hand
my hell in your hot breath

and all the past and all the future
that moment gave me strength enough
to burn all good and bad away
yet still leave me in love

and still I know beyond all doubt
you lips, your eyes, your breast
and more, much more, than this world now
that instant fire, eternal rest

when death or life would gladly come
the palace welcome as the tomb

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 am i not buried here?
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 reasons
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 me myself i am not sure
for you absorb me into you

when you look at me i appear
as though before i was nowhere
and if your eye becomes a tear
then i become your sorrow there

i seem myself yet wholly yours
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 quieted 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 tongue can't know the love that's faith

Kevin Straw

my memory of your red dress

my memory of 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 you, my saint, in your red dress

Kevin Straw

my way is now your sacred heart

my way is now your sacred heart
the worth of you, the truly loving part,
it’s there (‘a nowhere’ disbelievers say)
an 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

near-death experience

what on earth can you do when between death and you
is the tiniest soupspoon of time
and you still haven't said all the prose in your head
or wrote-off your reason in rhyme

and there's places abroad where you'd have adored
to drink yourself under the table
and that beautiful girl you'd have given a whirl
if you had been even near able

and there's people you know who'll be glad when you go
and pleased they weren't driven to kill
and the well-beloved few who insist they love you
just as long as they're named in your will

and then at death's hole you start to grow soul
and even believe in a hell
but you read in the good book your chances don't look good
of avoiding the heat for a spell?

Kevin Straw

night

it is so strange that night can be
the fullest and the loneliest hour
the deepest and the shallowest sea
the perfumed and the stinking flower

Kevin Straw

night is a wedding time for us

night is a wedding time for us
when the beast sleeps by the deer
and the sun is courteously away
and the moon and stars go clear

when the bedroom's like a holy cell
where touch can toll a single prayer
when we are silent, for words can't tell
the love like incense rising there

when the soft sheets whisper welcome
and an old song from the radio
recalls the fresh time we first met
and where we came from and must go

what in all the daylight world
is so golden good as this
when we can seal once more our love
with a night time wedding kiss?

Kevin Straw

night owls its way across the lamp lit grass

night owls its way across the lamp lit 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
to heal and give 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 flesh can love you as mine does

no flesh can love you as mine does
no eye can see you as does mine
no hand can reverence your flesh
not that which offers the divine

i've made the fatal error
to worship and not love
of turning love to terror
of loving much too much

and i must rip you out of me
the good thing that is bad
the very deepest part of me
the sane thing that is mad

and pain must cloud the clear blue sky
for i am too much you, you i

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 i 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 all the nightmares of a seasoned life

not all the nightmares of a seasoned life
can make me love life less
not all the cruelties of history
can bleed love from my breast

time seems sometimes conspiracy
to give despair and hate
a plot to blind the eye to sympathy
and seal in deadly night my fate

but this frail boat will brave the storm
that could cower in the lea
will toss and turn its little form
against the massive sea

who is so small who will not dare to live
to find the large or little life can give

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

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 i still 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
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 waiting on the night
and nothing more occurs to you
than you are dying like the light

then i can teach you how to die
not when I speak or write
but when i brave death's 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/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 turns night to lying day
fade into the mind's oblivion, go far away
to that vast keep: 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
can't reach where we both 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 neglect before

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?
each 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 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

our basement room

even now our basement room
we slept in all one summer long
so dark and cool like a catacomb
is still 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 shadow place
with love (or even like) in our embrace?

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

praise to the brown and cubic cow

praise to the brown and cubic cow
so four-square in the here and now
her flesh is grass from head to toes
each taste is everything she knows

she walks in beauty which she cannot see
(she has no mirror to be 'i' or 'me')
she feels when feeling till she feels no more
she never counts the cost or keeps the score

she's that she is - no yearning or regret
for what she cannot have yet can't forget
she stands four-square a challenge to us all
that the real is sensation, not recall

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 prevent 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

let death, like farmers, 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 suddenly i 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 quarrelled, 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 suddenly i 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

save all your love

save all your love
for those you touch
who live no farther
than you can see

for those who walk
where you can walk
whose fires' smoke
with yours blends free

for those whose hearts
you still can hear
whose thoughts are
in your thinking clear

for those who can
when danger comes
be your quick shield
around your fear

Kevin Straw

serpentine love

one dreary cold november day
beside the frozen serpentine*
we sat outside a small café
and kept the cold away with wine

the twilight fell black on the water
a mist anaesthetised 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
froze with our shivering breath

*a park lake in London

Kevin Straw

seven

you and i though unbelievers
still tried to make our love a 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

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 hearts are old before the face

some hearts are old before the face
and numbed by pain before life's race
and there's no drug, no surgeon's knife
can bring these living dead to life

some say religion is the clue
to let the Son in and the soul renew
but this unchosen darkness is too deep
the serpent hides who makes these weep

however knowing is the mind that delves
it can't know those who cannot know themselves
these are the damned despite their innocence
the ones who think their weakness their offence

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 someone at 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

some say death has no dominion

some say death has no dominion
that when we die there's no oblivion
that from the crematory flame
we'll rise ourselves yet not the same

that time and space will be no more
no male nor female rich nor poor
and yet we will have ears to hear
and lungs to sing an airless air

oh I could make a list forever
of ways in which God is so clever
but all that would be fantasy
beside the death of you or me

if there were life beyond the grave
we would be calmer and more brave
and thoughts of death would bring no fears
and God would not have given us tears

Kevin Straw

some women i see only naked

some women i see only naked
buttocks breasts and in between
- in places secular or sacred
eros strips clothing from the scene

is this a good start then to loving
this bare obsession with a part?
can flesh however deep it's moving
make love without the tender heart?

the answer's this: that wedded bliss
in law or outside in the dark
cannot be found in a bare kiss
till eros arrows in the heart

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
its 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 bet my life for death
whilst i have left the smallest breath! ”

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 love has conquered me
and left 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 i long to rest in christ

sometimes i long to rest in christ
to lean back on his sacrifice
to be safe in his hands on earth
till death gives soul eternal birth

how sweet to sing of heaven's rest
when of this tired life i'm bereft
how good the future is secure
that this rough road will soon run sure

and yet when I look round the earth
at life and death and springing birth
this longing seems a treachery
to deem this world so second'ry

for I've not loved and lost this far
to waste it all upon a doubtful dream
- the hurt and pleasure of my life
is all will be, is all there's been

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
and self-negation
is the worth 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's worth your blood
and nothing is made more good
by your choice of crucifixion
the self-made nails you hang on

Kevin Straw

stone world

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

when you and i
were still unbroken
we’d wish the stone world
were not there

but now i rush
to close the curtains
and wish the stone world
would appear

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

sudenly i turn and here it is

sudenly i turn and here it is
the film our love made years ago
the light and shadow of that bliss
we fleshed out for this abstract show

it runs for me frame after frame
turned by the longing i have now
to be its star again, its headline name
to be where light did really show

how is it memory can give
more substance to its shadow-play
than i can have who vainly live
in the painful sunlight of real day?

Kevin Straw

suppose a rose opened yet lived forever

suppose a rose opened yet lived forever
or a meteor stopped still burning in the sky
that is my deathly love for you that never
will live again and never die

i've lived in shadows since i took
your hand and died therein and in your eyes
since my heart stopped with just one look
since once i gambled for an eternal prize

and now my senses, numbed by sorrow,
only remind me of my useless tears
that i can't live that day again tomorrow
or tomorrow or tomorrow, for endless years!

all i can do is write that real embrace
and fill this emptiness with words
and be the abstract of time and space
a mourner at the song of birds

Kevin Straw

teddy bare

love can destroy beyond repair
in tatters with a one-eyed stare
a hermit in a lonely attic
with therapist or grim fanatic
- wrong love kills crueller than hate
its dead must live, yet life's too late

Kevin Straw

tell me if i love too much

tell me if i love too much
or tire you with my touch
or say more than you want to hear
or look at you with too much fear

say if a single step goes wrong
or if i crack one note in song
or want you more than you can give
or if i bore with my 'forgive? '.

let me be nothing if i can be
your prisoner happily unfree
within your hand's soft reach
the light your bright eyes teach

Kevin Straw

that we shall die is cause for cruelty

that we shall die is cause for cruelty
and yet we love, we show kindness
what keeps me from eating you, you me,
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
though she has broken my heart
some flakes escape to the air
while my life is falling apart

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

she shuts her compact then looks
out of the window at nothing
and i have double the grief
and many hard years of forgetting

Kevin Straw

the bony man

i love him, and he loves me
the bony man who sets me free
he is my jailer with the key
who locked me in, now sets me free

he made me love the pulsing earth
the bloody and ecstatic time of birth
the green, the blue, the sexual rain
the come of pleasure and the go of pain

he smiles the smile he smiled when i
was born in my mum’s smiling eye
and lovingly smacked me to life
and gave the ease, provoked the strife

he now holds out his endless arms
and shows me all his earthy charms
he seems to me the love i sought
for which my time was sold and bought

all’s closing down and switching off
life is a vanishing white dot
and yet i find a strange dark ease
upon my bony man’s hard knees

Kevin Straw

the holy tree

i think that i shall never be
a thing as holy as a tree

a tree whose hungry roots search deep
within God's ever-flowing keep

a tree that‘s in God's light all day
whose arms are ever raised to pray

a tree that will in Summer care
for God's small creatures nesting there

which in the Winter bears the snow
and harsh winds that would bring it low

till God again adorns its face
with leaf and blossom like heaven's grace

but let this poem made by me
be holy like the God-made tree

Kevin Straw

the love i locked away from me

the love i locked away from me
can never now be home to me
and all that prisoned tenderness
is now not nothing but even less

she is a dark star in my galaxy
that never will let time go free
a darkness i will never penetrate
within death's dark star state

i shall have to dare this endless night
who could have known her love's daylight
i shall feel all for what i lost
and yet that all will be a ghost

Kevin Straw

the loving lark sings in the sky

the loving lark sings in the sky*
or claps his wings aloft
oh were my mind so spry
and were my heart so soft!

loves deserves infinity
the resources of the sun
the fusion that's eternity
the many that is one

who would cage it for delight
or bar its skyward flight?
who would smother its pure song
or do it any wrong?

* 'In courtship the male [lark] may
sing in the sky or audibly clap his wings aloft.'

(Encyclopedia Britannica)

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 sharpest knife
and whispers 'you did this, not she,
you broke her heart, and broke your life'

Kevin Straw

the moon has waned in our light

the moon has waned in our light
the earth has yielded her children to us

- we have walked in the blood of nature
and lived apart in the concrete mind

- we have found our beginning and now know
our becoming is but our end

- we have made a wall of our desires
against the unwanted forces of love

- we have seen the edge and centre of all
and unveiled the empty face of god

- we have loved and hated too hard for nature
and the weeping earth grows tired of us

one day the lamb and tiger, the sun and moon,
will see the smoking wreckage of our power

Kevin Straw

the moving statue of your body

the moving statue of your body
has weighed my heart down now for years
as i who see you move in sunlight
am moved by your unmoving now to tears

i see your hair now set forever
about your stone immobile head
move as it moved upon my body
so moved beneath you on our bed

i feel your lips descend like angels
to touch mine with eternity
that now like coral are unmoving
beneath time's ever-moving sea

but as my life becomes unmoving
that memory itself is set
your statue's all i will remember
your moving now i will forget

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 odd thing is i loved her

the odd thing is i loved her
but did not say
that she was light to me
but i said nay

that every night i saw her
but in a fantasy
which often in the day
i'd stop to see

that she was everything
that i could touch or see
would make the lover
i was meant to be

now there's no more of her but me
a picture, and a pointless memory

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 two 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
gazed from their cliff on 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 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 sunlight now had left the room
and yet the moon held back the gloom
i kissed your lips for one last time
and 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 tears i cried...

the tears i cried
when we were through
i cried for me
and not for you

if our love ever
had been true
i would have cried
for me and you

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 for a vain annuity of truth
i sold my angel for a circus crown
and all the days i could have had my youth
were passed by with a silly frown

Kevin Straw

the way i want to go

that which pleases
is the way i want to go
and that which eases
is all i want to know

why should i try
the harmful thorn
when i might die
beneath the rose’s scorn?

why should i lie
and say that pain
is good, and that a sigh
is best for loss not gain?

come lie with me and steep
my soul in pleasure
and for a moment keep
time at my leisure

Kevin Straw

the weightless angel with pointless wings

the weightless angel with pointless wings
is but a parody of glory
for real love in no aether sings
its transient and sad/glad story

we're locked forever in the here and now
and love's the best we have of good
yet shore to shore its fragile prow
is subject to the wilful blood

but oh the glory in that little room
when love transforms its mundane light!
and oh the blackness of the gloom
when midday love becomes midnight!

love's locked forever in the here and now
and can diminish and can grow

Kevin Straw

the word for hate and that for love

the word for hate and that for love
vied with each other to be the first
and from that tension the human grew
to find a balance of the best and worst

what thin walls we've built to keep us clear
of fear without and hate within
to know what to reject and what hold dear
what makes this virtue and that sin!

the wolf knows and the tiger practices
the planetary movement of the blood
but we must write in stony emphasis
to keep in mind the evil from the good

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 touched life's deepest breath
like skiers on the ocean's depth

they look with cold 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 like cold meat down death's throat
without a joyful or complaining note

Kevin Straw

there is no love except the touch

there is no love except the touch
that heals the wound and dries the tears
feeling is nothing however much
that has no hand to calm the fears

if love cannot escape the heart
in real unselfish charity
the lover loves but quite apart
- an island in an empty sea

if there's a logo for humanity
it is the circle arms can form
to reach beyond the selfish me
and touch to make the cold world warm

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 used to be love like the sun

there used to be love like the sun
which stayed its course till death
and every two would be that one
to last till both's last breath

now love is like the shooting star
that's wondrous for a while
but gives no warmth, no growing power,
but just a short-lived smile

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 on 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 a long slow ladder)
we reached the earth, rejoined the race
and i never saw again her face

Kevin Straw

there was a season...

there was a season when a touch
taught me my immortality
the smallest of the great cosmos
gave me the all of god in me

and yet how tears and dreams would tear
away at this eternity
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,
return the heart 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

Kevin Straw

there'll be a day when day is done

there'll be a day when day is done
when all the bets are lost or won
when the mind's no longer touched by light
nor the heart sent crazy by the night

when all the world will disappear
within a single sorry tear
when neither bravery nor fear
will plague the body on the bier

when the blanket is cold stone
and earth a bed for naked bone
and all the power in the earth
cannot give soul a second birth

my love, that day, come stay a while
and weep a tear, then give a smile

Kevin Straw

there's no more poetry about you

there's no more poetry about you
least not the poetry thatï¿½s true
but you tread in an empty room
whose 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 bright black 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

Kevin Straw

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

there's nothing that can move me now
while i watch you asleep upon my bed
the world could end and jesus come
and still this picture still my 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

they cannot give who cannot weep

they cannot give who cannot weep
tears are the sharers of love/hate
without the winter into summer tears
there is no growth from stunting fears
the orbs of water that fill the eye
round out the blind and selfish I

Kevin Straw

they may erect a gravestone to my memory

they may erect a gravestone to my memory
but what's the bet in fifty years or less
not one sole foot will tread my cemet'ry
and decorate with flowers my loneliness

a few beyond the final rites will say
how good i was or strong or skilled in love
but soon these will beside my dumb self lay
like me unfeeling to the life above

but still the birds will sing, the flowers will grow
the trees will leaf/unleaf remorselessly
but over me no shadow will bestow
a prayer to help me through eternity

the quick so quickly now forget the dead
the dead that quickened them in heart and head

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 dark 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 all that’s true
that made a finger on your flesh
worth more than good or bad or breath

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 love was so deep underground
the more it was 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 death’s sign

- 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 with your next-me hate
the last hour i shall want to die
your warmth a feel away too late

i have spent years this close to you
this infinitely far away
but now it dawns that freedom's due,
i fear the empty bed, the lonely day

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

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

Kevin Straw

this white rose hanging in the green air

this white rose hanging in the green air
on a sunday afternoon in spring
is like your pale face as you climb the stair
to a dark room where lost bees sing

i follow your bright ankles there
the shoes that in the quietness ring
and think of you upon our cool bed bare
your blue eyes waiting shining to begin

a bird now challenges with song
a breeze runs chilling through the house
and all my grey thoughts now belong
to the scurrying to its hole blind mouse

and yet your voice sounds in my ears
your kiss is warm upon my face
so, brave now, i ascend the stairs
to the certainty of our embrace

Kevin Straw

this wound's forever i have given me

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

they say love binds and makes us 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 was/is future pain?
is this regretful memory a fake
and would i risk such love again?

Kevin Straw

those who madly strew their way...

those who madly strew their way
with shards before their naked feet
whose life is hurt, who throw away
all happiness they chance to meet

who faced with love cannot stand still
but must escape to loneliness
to live upon the barren hill
of blind and empty selfishness

for these life never is worthwhile
who must discard its living flower
and grasp thorns with a deathly smile
that pain may cure the healthy hour?

if you have prayers or the like to give
include in them these who refuse to live

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

too many tears for wasted years

too many tears for wasted years
have shot me quickly down to death
eroded my heart's rock with tears
and shortened my intake of breath

they cut me from the human race
and dropp by dropp grew stony hate
they put me in the condemned cell
and from that cell walked me to hell

i should not weep but live my life
enjoy defeat, the chance of strife,
know this is hard this rocky way
this new chance taken every day

to win or lose is never sure
life's both and both cannot be pure

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

we are switched on and then switched off

we are switched on and then switched off
and light is never long enough
to do and say what would make good
in this half bright and half dark wood

i hear the traffic tread the street
and it will flow when I'm dead beat
and all the universe still turn around
when I am staring underground

why burn this candle that will light
a tiny crack in endless night
why let the virgin white wax melt
for just a shade of seen and felt

why fool the mind with a forever
when one split second will be never
why give me passion for a while
yet paint death's shadow in her smile

but here i am, can do no more
save row my best from shore to shore

Kevin Straw

we are the loved ones of the dead

we are the loved ones of the dead
we are the beneficiaries of them still
we live because our strength and health
come from our forebears' living will

there is no wall across the wave
that carries us through time and space
to part the flower from the grave
death's dark decay from sunlit face

the dead live in us, life is death,
the singularity died for me
i am my parents now: their blood, their breath
their eyes now dead still let me see

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 can live lives of shadow play

we can live lives of shadow play
so fearful are we of the day
we can arrange a virtual scene
from which the real cannot be seen

we can shun any kind of chance
arrange a cold and bloodless dance
we can stay safe behind the walls
from that which rises and then falls

we can become numb to all feeling
to all that sends the senses reeling
we can stay put inside our dreams
until we hear afar our desperate screams

Kevin Straw

we must be careful when we get old...

we must be careful when we get old
not to turn youth to brass from gold
when all we owe the world's a death
a drying and a greying breath

love should remain within our wake
a laughing pleasure not a hard-faced ache
oh let them go, the waves will flow,
so let them have life while we go

there is a time when the feeble hand
must let its flowers fall on the land
a time when death not life must fill
the eye the brain the heart the will

let them go where they will
whose hearts beat still!

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 you could, i could not, love till death,
and that i painfully accept.
but somehow more profoundly i regret
the words that should not have been said.

Kevin Straw

we walked the park in a winter breeze

we walked the park in a winter breeze
among a nakedness of trees
we watched some seagulls from the sea
as the sun eyed palely you and me

it was as though the world slowed under
our in-step feet, our full-of-wonder,
and hand in frozen hand we trod
a white/green carpet of deathly sod

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

and knew the next spring had been won
for we had saved by love the pale-eyed sun

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 the universe
and of the old we thought a special something
the good and bad now seem an empty curse

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you and i shall be eternal orbiters
of new shores, new seas, and new lands
and nothing before shall be our arbiters
for what will matter is the touch of hands

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
in which i am not trapped or owned
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 love's 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 from 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 rewind all the years
to dry for you this evening's tears
i would turn bravely like a hero
from this sad finity to happy 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 a life worth filled with sorrow

what is a life worth filled with sorrow
by caring too much for tomorrow?
what is the day's worth if we save
it up to ornament the grave?

we must not go down any road
to satisfy a moment's lust
but there's an instinct deep in us
that makes a deep yea-saying just

'no' can slam shut an iron gate
wrought with the iron words 'too late'
and all that might have been will lie
beyond our rage, deaf to our cry

its ghost can shadow all our days
and haunt the night with fantasies

Kevin Straw

what is for wounds?

what is for wounds that when they fade
still haunt the night and day with fears,
that still are deep as death, that made
a hurt past pain, beyond all tears?

so i was wrenched apart by love
my heart laid open pumping blood
was left a wide-eyed crawling corpse
all bad beginning, all end of good

only my tears, niagaras of regret,
shed in that endless day of night
brought back the healing pain, and set
the bones and sewed the wounds up tight

tears took the pain away, but yet
the scars are there, i'll never quite forget

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 a bright reality?
do i hold something beyond which you
are there yet here and 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 letters can retrieve our love

what letters can retrieve our love?
what sounds dispel our hate?
the speaking eye is not enough
for love gone makes regret too late

but we, still mourners at love’s tomb,
shed tears that cannot say goodbye
to the dead god in his marble gloom
who cares not if we laugh or cry

and so we prowl and prowl around
like lions which have grossly eaten
all that was prey within their ground
and know not they are beaten

Kevin Straw

what man can love like woman can

what man can love like woman can
can be so warm and giving
can smile a tearful grey to gold
and make a life worth living

can single handed single touch
and ease the pain of life
can say with eyes all any body can
can voice away the strife

whose heart keeps beating steady
to calm the twists of chance
whose arms are warm and ready
to bring a lonely heart romance

show me that man and I will say
if such, the world will never fade away!

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 is the daybreak doing
showing your unconcerned face
and your packing and to-ing and fro-ing
as you ruthlessly fill your case?

i cannot believe that the morning
does not show a sign of your grief
in a room that is full of the dawning
dark of my shattered belief

it seems it is i who is dying
and you are a flower in the room
and the morning so cold to my crying
is 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 dead and had my say

when I am dead and had my say
and breath has winged its final way
when time has timed-out my tired eye
and death's deep ocean dumbed my cry

then hover over me a while
and change my dead frown to a smile
but leave my body to the crow of death
and live for living eyes and breath

for there's no love that suits the dead
or makes him stand or fills his head
no tears or smile can make him breed
when only death grows from his seed

so never think of me again
who's numb to pleasure and to pain

Kevin Straw

when i am slave to jewels of your hair

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 entranced 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 i die i'll say forgive me

when i die i'll say forgive me
from the still lips of my past
for then at last my eyes shall still be
a mirror to my lifeï¿½s sad waste

when i am dead i'll have the power
to shed the bitter wind of breath
gathered so much hour by hour
that shedding would have caused my death

and so i will be brave by dying
and silently speak my regret
for then my silent body lying
will pay at last my depthless debt

Kevin Straw

when i have ceased to play at dead

when i have ceased to play at dead
the squirrels foxes birds will come
and drum their feet above my head

and fool about upon the weedy grave
that hides this talking fool now dumb
who thought himself so wise so brave

whose lightest footstep would make fly
these that now add up to life's sum
without the zero that is i

who blankly stares at mother earth
who wonders why she gave him birth

Kevin Straw

when i look at a painting or hear a song

when i look at a painting or hear a song
then i am a puritan alone with god
not a catholic for whom a priest must speak

and all the abstractions of critical thought
that i or anyone else has about that moment
are like a mist that flees in the morning sun

why gabble into my ear irrelevant abstractions
to tell me what i should be thinking now
when all i want is the fact of my senses?

as in her silent arms i know without a word
the flame that only sight and touch can bring
to show a thoughtless love, a vital truth

Kevin Straw

when nights are broken by my broken heart

when nights are broken by my broken heart
and in the broken mirrors of the past 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 i see nothing but her eyes and face
and so i walk and talk unthinkingly
a ghost held in her firm embrace

i fence a little piece of me from grief
and walk there daily in its cool calm ways
stay there each day a little longer for relief
till time gives back my nights and days

Kevin Straw

when you kiss

when you kiss and feel that death
has taken all your breathless breath
yet still somehow your heart beats on
and still you live though life is gone

when time and space have disappeared
and everything you have most feared
is overtaken by an endless this
of two joined in a single kiss

when moved from this fast-moving life
beyond the world's dividing strife
when you and someone else are one
yet you gain all by being gone

then this is love beyond a doubt
and this the life you must live out

Kevin Straw

where is that love...

where is that love that's not
like walking in the dark?
where is that bright spot
filled with the singing lark?

where is that other hand
that will not slap or scold?
that eye the eye can stand
that is not bought or sold?

where is that tenderness
got from a living beast?
that ends not in hard loneliness
and pain deep in the breast?

where is that love so fine
that i can call all mine?

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 counts the tears lost love is worth

who counts the tears lost love is worth
how many days till hope again has birth
how many hours of staring into space
at her forever not forgotten face

how many years before the softness of her hair
becomes a ghost and leaves me here
or that eternal night of our first kiss
will cease to make me feel a life I miss

when will i drag my corpse out of that tomb
that died when your eyes spoke my doom
and what maneuvre make my faltering heart
beat once again to make my life restart

the present is the past and here is there
for still I know the touch of your soft hair
and none knows when the past will pass away
how many years till love will cease to stay

Kevin Straw

who from the thorns of love would ride...

who from the thorns of love would ride
again that sunlit cloud of paradise?
who having been burnt in love's hell
would take the long odds of love's lies?

who would not rather take the chance
of life beyond sweet eden's gate
than in the glare of love's blind light
risk once again a false smile's hate?

and yet the silk and shining of your hair
like a snake's eyes would draw me there!

Kevin Straw

who lives and dies for love

who lives and dies for love
is first in estimation

who follows that wandering star
to its uncertain destination

is far superior to we who fear
love’s inspiration

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
love's all for not enough
who free-wheel to a safe old age
not knowing all of 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 freely given blood?

how can this climax of the flesh
be after judged as something bad
as though blame could be laid for breath
or seeing seen as being mad?

love makes the present, future, and the past
it is the first we cannot tell from last

Kevin Straw

who says that love has took its course

who says that love has took its course
and left the world a cinder for the sun?
that no more kindness or remorse
can green and flower in anyone?

who says that tenderness has gone
and only lust is left a snake
that takes our guilt and innocence as one
into its dark and hellish lake?

who says that you and i should not
till deathly darkness fills the soul
make promises that are begot
and kept by love and suffering whole?

who says that love is here and gone tomorrow
if you and i are brave in face of sorrow?

Kevin Straw

who would be a bird at every moment fearing

who would be a bird at every moment fearing?
i was when I loved you frightened while still feeding
even in the darkness of the deepest evening
alone with you was nervous and yet needing

but your body was a thing I so longed having
i would forget my wish to go on living
as though a rabbit in a bright light seeing
transfixed the death he could not help but giving

it was your body made me think of dying
and therefore need not worry about living
the black hair on my ready eyes cascading
that made me disregard the watch i should be giving

i'd rather be a bird at every moment fearing
than trammelled in your flesh and hair unheeding

Kevin Straw

who would love angels if they sang...

who would love angels if they sang
and put their tongue into the ear
and bells of victory loud rang
and dissipated every fear

who would want purity so pure
it made the insecure too sure
the white that gleamed so bright
it was the colour of pure shite

and who would want eternal light
without the fantasy of night
the crystal beams that, blinding, black
the white of what we ought to lack

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 break the body's ceiling
and make in the eternal air
the thing i want to say right there?

why canï¿½t i mouth into your heart
the certain truth to tear apart
the veil that mind from flesh divides
and rip from falsehood truth open wide?

Kevin Straw

why does God not say he's sorry

why does God not say he's sorry
for the suff'ring he creates
or tell of his sincere worry
for the earth he's filled with hate?

where is his voice when mothers cry
whose babies have been stabbed and shot
to offer his apology
to say he would have but could not?

why can he not appear to millions
who helpless die for want of food
to tell these of his vast dominions
his power is weak, but purpose good?

where is he when you want him most
in the torture house or cancer ward
this weak elusive helpless ghost
who looks on suffering without a word?

some say it's all a mystery
that in the end all will be well
but i say that is all a mockery
if God's a no-show in his hell

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
though gone is still a love
that makes me of myself bereave

all thought all feeling and all virtue
are nothing to this touch of you
those millimetres lost in space:
my heart, my mind, my frowning 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 the green to brown

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

Kevin Straw

would it be better to forget the tiger

would it be better to forget the tiger
than live with him in nature’s heart?
no, i would be a deer treading the shadow
of his fresh smell and killing dart

better the teeth that finishes the light
than the dark of vain security
better the short run into the night
than hide from death’s reality

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 eyeless stars,
and dare the claws, the bloody scars

Kevin Straw

you are unseemly in my heart

you are unseemly in my heart
a poisoned unrepentant dart
and all my flesh is icy numb
my nerves and brain are icy dumb

i am the worm your egg is in
my flesh a meal just for your sin
and though i cannot call me dead
i am a nothing heel to head

i am the shadow of your life
the pain you should have by your strife
and were i dead i still would be
the emptiness that is the living me

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 what you thought flaw

the small or large you thought too much
you re-sized with a look or touch
if what i loved i kept from you,
you smiled yet made me guilty too

you kept my feet above the ground
my mind among the lost not found
you rearranged my house till i
knew not which door for what to try

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

Kevin Straw

you cover me like snow the earth

you cover me like snow the earth
till i am nearly dead by dearth
i cannot 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 hope snow can’t outlast the light

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
and held all day the photograph
behind my eyes, bright in my brain

how is it beauty passes through
the flesh and bone to mental me
and that a thing of merest shadow
becomes more real than the real me?

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 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 to the sun
a chance to make this ragged whole
to end this pointless road of just begun

you licensed me to live my hour
more rich than i thought it could be
you were the most enticing flower
that would receive this humblest 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

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 breeze could 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

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 are too weak to hate or love
and i'm too weak to say 'enough'

Kevin Straw