

## Poetry Series

**Sandra Brennan**

**- poems -**

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## Broccoli

I read an article on aversion therapy  
And decided to give it a try  
Everytime you cross my mind,  
I replace that thought with broccoli.  
So now I've been thinking about broccoli  
24/7 for well over a week now,  
Enough so that I could write the  
Worlds first, all broccoli cookbook,  
Enough so that I wouldn't be surprised  
If my brain was now green and resembled it.  
Enough so that I don't think I will  
Ever want to eat broccoli again.  
And the funny thing is that now,  
Everytime I open the freezer  
And see that half used bag of frozen broccoli,  
I think about you.  
Damn it to hell.

Sandra Brennan

## Click of a Door Closing

I thought I'd be ok.  
Thought I could just stop by,  
Pick up the last of my stuff,  
Wave goodbye and leave  
With a smile on my face.  
Thought I had come to accept  
My new life without you in it.  
Then you opened the door  
And I felt this happiness veneer  
I had created, crack wide open  
And for a split second I wanted  
To beg you, to let me stay.  
I didn't, though,  
Just plastered on a fake smile  
And feined indifference, or tried.  
I thought I could brag about  
How great my life was going,  
My new home, my new job, etc...  
Make you regret pushing me away.  
But when you asked how I was,  
All I could say was 'Fine. Just Fine.'  
Funny, how that lie  
Just tripped off my tongue.  
I wanted to say I missed you,  
That I feel lost, and scared  
And uncertain of where I'm going.  
Things I didn't realize I felt  
Until I saw you again.  
I could tell you felt as awkward as I.  
I hate that the most,  
Loosing the comraderie between us,  
Turning into strangers, again.  
Months of a life shared, now over.  
I know, we're lucky,  
No ugly scenes, no screaming matches  
No trashing each other, ripping each other up.  
Just the click of a door closing,  
And nothing left to say.

Sandra Brennan

## Fan-fuckin'tastic

He was never a coffee house kind of guy.  
Never understood the attraction I had  
For overpriced beverages and funky surroundings,  
So I never expected to see him here,  
In my domain.  
He had on the same red sweater he was wearing  
When I first met him-  
Funny, how that was my first thought.  
And when he asked me how I was,  
I wanted to paint on a big fake smile  
And say 'Fan-fuckin'-tastic.'  
But I couldn't even say I was fine,  
And funny, how I had believed I was fine  
Up until he asked me.  
Yeah...I never could lie to him,  
Even though I was so good at lieing to myself.  
I wondered if the day would come  
When I could look him in the eye  
Without feeling like a fool.  
Apparently, not yet, maybe not ever.  
I feel like I've aged a hundred years  
Since I walked out of his door,  
And not grown any wiser, just more leery.  
I wish I could hate him for not loving me,  
Hate him for politely declining when  
I handed my heart over to him.  
Hate him for making me wish I was  
Good enough to be with him,  
And hating myself because I wasn't.  
But, I can't hate him, never could.  
I know I can't blame him for  
My own self destruction, as much as I'd like to.  
But next time I see him, and he asks me  
How I am, I hope I can say 'fan-fuckin'tastic'  
And mean it.

Sandra Brennan

## Freeze

I always hated that speech  
The "You're a nice woman, but I don't think  
We're right for each other." Getting dumped speech.  
I actually admire the men who have the guts to give it.  
Better than those who never call back,  
Who just take what pleasure they can get  
Then disappear like rats in the night.  
I've heard it to many times,  
And each time I feel something inside me  
Go hard, and cold.  
I wonder what happened to the warmhearted woman  
That use to dwell in this body.  
Wonder when she became so cynical and jaded.  
Wonder when she stopped believing in happily ever after  
And just accepted fly by night men as all she deserved.  
I don't really like being that woman.  
Don't like the voice inside my head that says  
"Don't get your hopes up" every time I meet a man.  
I remember being a twenty year old bride,  
Thinking I'd be mated forever with my one true love.  
But-he wasn't it, never was.  
So now I just keep searching,  
Wondering where the hell this other soul is,  
This person who I'm meant to be with.  
I'm beginning to think, he isn't out there at all.  
I wonder how much more disappointment  
My heart can take,  
Before it freezes completely  
And stops beating.

Sandra Brennan

## Good Deed

I was doing my good deed for the day,  
I only had to deliver his meal,  
Give him a smile and a prayer,  
Then walk away, job done.  
But when he opened the screen door,  
He had the look of someone who  
had spent too many hours alone...  
Too many hours thinking about the  
Tricks life can play on a person.  
I saw that look in my own eyes  
Looking in the mirror, too often.  
The badge on my chest said 'Chaplain'  
And I know to him it meant confessor,  
And I hesitated knowing  
That was not my mission here.  
I told him I could only stay a minute,  
Then listened as he told me about his wife,  
Gone now for a decade, but his memory of her  
As clear as glass.  
'She was a damn good woman, ' he said  
'A fine woman-just like you.'  
Just like me, he said, as if he  
Could see me deserving of a man's love  
For half a century-like her.  
I felt honored he would think so,  
But I felt like a fraud too,  
Knowing I was nowhere in the same league  
As the woman who had been the love of his life.  
I let him talk on, and absorbed  
Every word, knowing he just needed someone  
To hear him talk about her,  
Validate their love, their life, somehow.  
I felt at odds listening to their story,  
At a moment in time when my own heart  
Felt as if it had been kicked once too often.  
My job was to offer comfort, but it seemed  
He was comforting me, telling me  
That it wasn't too late, to love,  
That love lasts past death, past time  
Love, is the only thing that matters...  
Leaving him some hours later,  
I felt humbled and joyous, and at peace,  
And open to finding the man  
Who will love me like that.

Sandra Brennan

## **Kryptonite**

I feel all powerful woman, most of the time,  
Like nothing can hold me back  
I am the speeding train roaring down the track  
And my strength knows no bounds.  
But bring a man into the picture and all changes  
Suddenly I'm weak and my power shifts.  
Men it seems, are my kryptonite.  
Robbing me of my common sense  
And my will to resist sin and flesh.  
I wonder if Superman craved his kryptonite,  
Even as he cursed it,  
If he needed it, like breath, like water, like food.  
If kryptonite was his drug of choice.  
I see broad shoulders swinging my way,  
And the weakness settles in,  
The thoughts in my head diminish  
Until all I crave is his skin next to mine.  
Lust, like poison flows through me  
Infecting me at my most basic level.  
There isn't a cure for this, just distance,  
Just knowing for my own good,  
I need to keep away, keep my head clear.  
Aww...but for those moments,  
Before I am consumed  
And spit out again,  
Kryptonite is all I crave.

Sandra Brennan

## Lump

I don't really feel connected to it  
This weird lump I found on my body  
Seems like a foreign object that  
Somehow got planted here when  
I wasn't paying attention.

It has my attention now.

They don't like to tell you bad news  
Over the phone, the nurse just says  
The doctor wants to talk to you in person,  
To schedule surgery, she tells me.  
But she won't tell me why-

The unknown is a terrifying thing.  
I lie in bed and feel this thing,  
Like a marble planted deep under my skin  
And wonder if this tiny growth  
Has the power to kill me.  
Seems impossible, that something so small  
Could lead to my demise.

I read the copy of the report again  
Neurofibroma, possible sarcoma.  
That sentence still leaps off the page  
And even my uneducated mind knows  
That those words are not good.  
I google the diagnosis and wish I hadn't.

The doctor does not try to make light of it  
Just tells me it has to come out  
Tells me within the week he will cut me open  
And scrape this thing out of me,  
No way to know if it is malignant until then.

So now I play the waiting game.  
Spend my hours wondering if this...thing,  
Is like a missile gathering speed  
Targeting me, ready to blast my world apart.  
Or if it is just nothing at all  
A benign little growth that just popped up  
Out of no where, no harm done.

Until then, I just pray.

Sandra Brennan

## Mormons on Bicycles

I have a fetish for those boys  
That travel in pairs.  
Their crisply cut hair and  
Stark, white shirts.  
The way their carefully knotted ties  
Blow in the wind as they peddle furiously,  
On their noble quest to save us all  
From certain purgatory,  
Or at the very least,  
Save all those who dare to sit  
Waiting at bus stops.  
There is something about young men  
With fresh scubbed skin  
And clean, pure souls  
That makes me want to whisper  
My dirtiest thoughts in their ears,  
And watch as faces turn red and hot,  
And that look of innocence fade from eyes  
As they realize that there are pleasures  
To be had in this carnal Garden of Eden,  
And I am the serpent, tempting them.  
I look at these young men in their prime  
And can only think of my own tag-team fantasy  
And want to send buttons flying as I rip  
Open shirts and unbuckle and unzip  
As my lips travel down to the temple  
That I want to worship.  
I want them to fill me with the holy spirit,  
And make me scream out to God and Jesus,  
And the heavens as I descend  
To that next plane of existence,  
Where all is light and joy...  
And heaven is mine.

Sandra Brennan

## Moving On

I've always hated this part,  
The dividing of the stuff...  
The packing and trying to remember  
What is his, and what is mine  
Putting my own solitary life  
Back into boxes-moving out, moving on.  
Trying to find some way  
To look at this as a new beginning  
Not the pathetic ending  
That it feels like, right now.  
I wish I could hate you...  
Wish you had turned out to be some  
Horrible excuse for a man  
And that I was walking away feeling  
Lucky to be rid of you...  
But... the truth is, you are still  
The nicest man I've ever known.  
And I wish...I wish...I wish...  
I wasn't so completely wrong for you.  
And I'm trying to come out of this  
Whole thing with some dignity,  
But I feel like even that, is in shreds.  
I don't know why I thought, you could fix me.  
Maybe it's because you were  
The first man that I could not stick  
A big 'loser' sign on, and walk away.  
But-it isn't your job to fix me,  
Or even love me. It never was.  
It was never suppose to get this complicated.  
What I hate most is that I already miss you,  
Even now, when you are only 10 feet away.  
I can't imagine walking out that door,  
Knowing I will never come back.  
That I will no longer be welcome in your life.  
I know I've said I'm sorry to you,  
More times than I can even count,  
And I know that being sorry doesn't  
Change a damn thing for either of us.  
But...I am sorry.  
You are right, though.  
We're just kidding ourselves, better to go now  
Than to drag it out any longer.  
It is time to move on.

Sandra Brennan

## Mud Puddles

He carries an umbrella if there is  
More than a fifty percent chance of rain.  
If it pours, I just get wet,  
And stomp in mud puddles for good measure.  
He thinks his words out carefully  
Before he ever opens his mouth,  
Where I am ruled by emotion and say things  
Without thinking at all,  
Then find myself constantly making amends.  
He is linear and I am abstract.  
Sometimes I wish I could be more like him,  
More sensible, logical, realistic-grounded.  
Normal.  
But I think with my heart, and react from my gut,  
And my head usually has little to do  
With any of my major decisions.  
I wonder sometimes if he looks down on me,  
Thinks I'm insane, being the way I am.  
Yeah-he probably does.  
I can't say I blame him.  
As a child, while my classmates  
Were learning equations, I was busy,  
Gazing out windows, and letting  
My imagination run wild.  
I still do that. All the time.  
But...poetry doesn't make him weep,  
And great art doesn't send his heart racing,  
The way it does mine.  
And I wouldn't trade that,  
Not for all the common sense in the world.  
So there it is, when it comes down to it,  
I like who I am just fine,  
And I respect, and admire who he is too,  
Very much so, and I don't want to change him,  
I just wish...I just wish...  
He'd stomp in a mud puddle now and then.

Sandra Brennan

## Not Thinking

I'm trying not to think too much,  
Trying not to analyze or dwell on the what ifs,  
Trying to just get through the next minute,  
The next hour, the next day  
With all my faculties intact.  
Wiping my mind clean of all my foolish mistakes.  
I thought when I hit forty,  
I'd be smarter, wiser-less likely  
To fall flat on my face.  
It just seems that my mistakes  
Are just grander and more spectacular.  
God, I hate feeling like a fool.  
And having no one to blame but myself  
Just makes it worse.  
I am fighting the part of me that wants  
To curl up into a ball and die,  
The part of me that wants to cover up pain  
With food and sex and alcohol,  
The part of me that wants to revert back to form,  
And live in the dark where it is comfortable.  
I lay flat on the floor and count my breaths  
And empty my mind of every thought, or try...  
But there you are again,  
And I am so frustrated that I can't shake you  
Out of my head, and be rid of you for good,  
I just want to scream.  
Words that should never have been said,  
Words I never wanted to hear  
Are on a loop in my head and I wish  
I could erase them, wipe them clean  
From my mind so I could just move on and forget  
That you ever existed at all.  
For now, I would settle, for a minute  
Of not thinking about you.

Sandra Brennan

## On my 40th Birthday

On my 40th birthday,  
I went to a book store,  
Pulled a book off the shelf  
Turned to page eight, and saw my name  
In boldface type, over my own words.  
I was happy to fork over the 11.95+tax  
To buy a book with my own poems in it,  
Even knowing my free copy was in the mail.  
I just wanted to hold the book in my hands,  
Wanted to see my own validation in print.  
On my 40th birthday  
I got up in front of the biggest crowd  
I'd ever performed in front of,  
And unloaded my soul for twenty minutes straight,  
For once, so comfortable in the spotlight  
The words just flowed out without struggle.  
I felt the waves of love and understanding  
From the audience, for once, so receptive.  
The standing ovation at the end made me cry.  
On my 40th birthday  
One of my favorite teachers from high school  
Told me he was very proud of me,  
Proud of the person I'd become,  
Said he always knew I'd be somebody, someday.  
He bought one of my chapbooks and asked me  
For my autograph, and told me to keep in touch.  
On my 40th birthday,  
Eight people told me they loved me  
Two dozen people hugged me  
Fifty people sang me Happy Birthday  
One person bought me flowers  
And one person let me cry on his shoulder  
When I was overwhelmed by it all.

Sandra Brennan

## **Pondering 9/11**

I may be the first person to say this-  
But...I needed 9/11.  
That day that rocked me to my core  
And made me step back in fear  
Of the world...of the life I was living.  
That day that knocked me to my knees  
And opened my eyes.  
That day changed me,  
On every fundamental level there is.  
Made me rearrange my priorities.  
Made me realize I couldn't live in lies  
If death was knocking on my door.  
I started telling the truth then,  
First to myself, then to anyone who would listen.  
A stage and a mic and a spotlight  
And feeling stark naked I would stand  
And tell my truth, bare my soul.  
And with every truth I told,  
I found out who I was.  
I didn't know any of those people  
Who died that day  
But I think about them all the time,  
Think about how their deaths,  
In a strange way...gave me life.  
And I honor them for that.

I

Sandra Brennan

## Rambling on God

Every morning when I get into my car  
I say, 'God, watch over me today.'  
And whether he does or not, I don't know,  
But it makes me feel safer, having said it.  
Me and God, we have an understanding.  
I do my best not to fuck up,  
And he does his best to help me  
Clean up the mess, when I do.  
My latest lessons have been about trust,  
Trusting in myself, trusting my feelings,  
Trusting that somehow, things are going  
To turn out exactly the way they are meant to,  
And I don't have to do a thing, except be myself.  
Easier said, than done, most days.  
I keep forgetting, that it isn't all about me.  
That I am just one of billions,  
One dropp in the ocean.  
But without me, the ocean would be one dropp less.  
It's all in how you look at it.

Sandra Brennan

## Shopping for Men on the Internet

I decided to go shopping online  
For my one true love.  
E-Harmony seems to think  
The perfect man for me  
Is a 44 year old Catholic Republican  
Unemployed gun collector,  
Who lives with his mother...  
I beg to differ.  
I must have filled out the questionnaire wrong  
Or maybe I've set my sights too high.  
Instead of looking for love,  
I should be just looking to get laid,  
With no expectations.  
That use to be enough, back in the day.  
Sex without feeling, sex without meaning,  
Raw, make me scream, clothes ripping  
Heart pounding, wall thumping hot sex.  
As I recall, I use to like it,  
That is until the damned man involved,  
Would open his mouth and piss me off.  
It use to be easier to come by,  
Or maybe I was just easier then, more needy.  
More afraid of being alone,  
Than I was of being with a complete stranger.  
A man sends me an instant message,  
Asking if he can come over and play.  
His pic doesn't look half bad,  
It would be easy to say yes, just to ease  
This frustration that's been burning.  
But...something in me wants more.  
I deserve more...I deserve better.  
Is it wrong to want the whole package?  
Wrong to want romance, and to be seduced  
Heart and soul, over body?  
To want happily ever after,  
And a castle in the suburbs?  
It isn't easy, living without sex,  
But it's harder, living without love.  
So-I'll wait a little longer,  
Maybe rewrite my online ad,  
Cruise and peruse the men's ads too,  
Maybe Mr Right just signed on.

Sandra Brennan

## **The Big Picture**

We don't see the big picture  
But, maybe we aren't meant to,  
Or aren't ready to, yet.  
I think God gave each religion,  
Each race, a piece of this puzzle.  
And ignorant as we humans are,  
We each think that one piece, we possess,  
Is all there is.  
I wonder if God is just biding his time,  
Waiting for us to figure it out,  
To put it together.  
To realize no one people or religion  
Has all the answers.  
That only when we work together,  
Will the pieces fall into place.  
That's when the big picture,  
Will be revealed.

Sandra Brennan

## Toes

He painted my toenails red.  
Lying in bed, my foot in his lap  
Carefully applying polish to each nail  
His face a mask of concentration  
Trying to get it just right,  
I had to laugh because he looked so intent.  
He smiled and leaned over and kissed my knee.  
'Are you always going to paint my toes?'  
I had asked him and he just grinned and said.  
'Forever, Baby.'  
Today I looked down and saw the polish  
Was cracked and worn and coming off.  
I remembered that promise he made  
And couldn't keep.  
I set about removing the last of the polish  
He had so carefully applied weeks ago.  
I reached for the red polish,  
But then put it away. Red was for him.  
So I painted them pink instead,  
My favorite color,  
My toes again.

Sandra Brennan

## Treading Water

I know it isn't always going to be perfect.  
That there will be days when  
We'll look at each other and wonder  
'What the hell was I thinking? '  
It's inevitable as taking your next breath.  
I want you to be the one I lean into  
On the wild turns in life,  
Not the one I have to fight against  
To keep from drowning.  
Somehow, we have to learn to swim together  
When the murky waters want to pull us under.  
I felt for a long time, before I met you,  
Like I was taking my last breath  
Before going under one last time.  
You threw me a lifeline and now,  
All I want in this life, is to spend my days  
Lazily floating next to you.  
But life isn't that simple, is it?  
So for now, I'm going to tread water  
And keep my head over the surface  
And wait for you to come join me,  
In this pool of life.  
Come on in,  
The waters fine.

Sandra Brennan

## Voted Nicest Girl

Under my senior picture in my yearbook is a caption  
That reads 'Voted Nicest Girl'.  
I gotta say, that title has always pissed me off.  
I wanted to be the sexy girl, the funky girl,  
The too cool for school, girl.  
The most likely to go down on a married teacher,  
Under the bleachers, girl  
But no-I am, and will always be 'the nice girl.'  
What few people know is that under this Marcia Brady-esque exterior  
There is a seething sexy Catwoman dying to come out and play.  
I know that I could bring a man to his knees  
With all I have inside me  
And I've always thought that a man on his knees  
...is a very, very good thing.  
When they look at me, I know what they see...  
A Twenty first century June Cleaver.  
Someone who is good and kind,  
Reliable and sickly sweet.  
Someone who always bakes birthday cakes,  
And cooks Thanksgiving dinner.  
Someone who can be counted on for 3 dozen cupcakes  
At each and every bake sale.  
Someone who will never be late for carpool.  
I am the one everyone writes in  
As their emergency contact person  
Because they know I will always be there...  
Do you know how hard that is to live up to, some days?  
I'm not saying that that isn't me, it is.  
I admit it, grudgingly. I am nice.  
I love doing things for others, making people happy.  
But there are days when this nice girl,  
Gets tired of being so nice, so in control.  
You look at me and see my smile and think, I'm wonderful, right?  
I just got to say that sometimes...  
Sometimes, appearances are deceiving.  
Oh you don't want to know all the illicit thoughts  
That travel through my head on a daily basis.  
I think if someone opened my mind for the world to see  
They would have me thrown in jail  
And kept under lock and key.  
Children would be told to stay away from me,  
Old ladies would be scandalized and mortified  
And men...men who want to take a walk on the wild side  
Who love to live dangerously...  
Would be banging down my door.  
You think nice girls only think nice thoughts?  
Ha! A lot you know!  
You have no idea of the erotic, exotic, triple X rated thoughts  
That run through my mind,24/7.  
So sure, I'll feed your dog while your out of town  
And babysit your kids, and make you soup when your sick,  
But don't think, not for a moment, that that's all I am, or all I could be.

But you want to know what this nice girl wants most?  
In a perfect world, I would find someone,  
Who was voted Nicest Boy in his senior class,  
Who thinks just like me.  
Who is kind to strangers and animals, and loves kids  
Who knows a thousand ways to please a woman  
Using just his tongue...  
Someone who will rock my world on Saturday night  
And stand beside me in church, on Sunday morning.  
I want a nice boy with a nasty, nasty mind who will love me just right.  
Someone who will take out the garbage and fix my car.  
Someone who knows how to make a woman scream and beg for more.  
I'm looking for Ward Cleaver with a raging wild side.  
I want someone who will love all the sides of me,  
Who sees through the nice girl to the hot woman underneath  
Someone who is solid but can satisfy.  
Yeah, that's what this nice girl wants.

Sandra Brennan

## Whole

Whole

They say at the root of all addictions  
Is the search for wholeness,  
Or more accurately, the need  
To fill in the hole, we all have inside.  
I have to admit, some days  
This hole seems the size of  
The Grand Canyon and I keep  
Trying to find the one thing,  
The one person, the one vice  
That is going to make me feel  
Complete.  
But the thing is, that doesn't happen.  
The more you try to fill in the hole,  
The bigger it gets,  
The more it consumes what's left of you.  
It takes a while, to recognize this,  
To realize that instead of digging yourself out,  
You're digging yourself deeper.  
That you are the one with the shovel,  
Making it all worse.  
It's hard to get out of your own way.  
Hard to ask for the rope to pull yourself out.  
Hard to admit that the hole inside of you  
Is beyond your ability to repair, or hide.  
That is when you learn humility.  
That is when you find out who your friends are,  
The ones who will throw you the rope,  
Reach down with a hand and pull you up.  
Or stand on the edge of the void  
With their own shovels and help you  
Fill it all in, until your strong enough  
To climb out on your own.  
I know I'm not the only one,  
With this hole inside.  
Not the only one battling demons  
And trying to find my way home,  
Make myself whole.  
So, throw me a rope here, help me now,  
And I promise to return the favor  
When your time comes.

Sandra Brennan