

## Song of Myself

Walt Whitman

11

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;  
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,  
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long hair,  
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun, they do not  
ask who seizes fast to them,  
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch,  
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his knife at the stall in the  
market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,

Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,  
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms,  
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so sure,  
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags underneath on its  
tied-over chain,  
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall he stands pois'd  
on one leg on the string-piece,  
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his hip-band,  
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat away from his  
forehead,  
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his polish'd and  
perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop there,  
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well as forward sluing,  
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what is that you  
express in your eyes?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and day-long ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,  
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else,  
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well to me,  
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,  
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,  
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the chickadee, the  
prairie-dog,  
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,  
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the  
drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

“A Woman Waits for Me” by Walt Whitman

A WOMAN waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,  
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the  
right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,  
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,  
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the  
seminal milk,  
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties,  
delights of the earth,  
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,  
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications of  
itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness  
of his sex,  
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,  
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those women  
that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,  
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,  
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband  
of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,  
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,  
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,  
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike,  
retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,  
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-  
possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,  
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,  
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake, but

for others' sakes,  
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,  
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,  
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,  
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,  
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States, I  
press with slow rude muscle,  
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,  
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated  
within me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,  
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,  
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and America,  
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic girls,  
new artists, musicians, and singers,  
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,  
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-spendings,  
I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and you  
interpenetrate now,  
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as I  
count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,  
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death,  
immortality, I plant so lovingly now.