

The background is a solid yellow color. There are several large, white, abstract, organic shapes scattered across the page, resembling stylized leaves or petals. These shapes are positioned in the top-left, top-right, and bottom-left corners, leaving the central area mostly clear for text.

talk to me
like autumn

poems by
rae marcus

Talk to Me
Like
Autumn

Rae Marcus



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Talk to Me Like Autumn

To a Granddaughter

In Loving Memory of Ann Eliza Elliot Dowdy

My grandmother once told me
"Your life is like a blank sheet of paper."
I was just thirteen, young and naive
And I simply humored her.
But as time went by
I saw she'd been right
As each day passed
I wrote, erased, and rewrote
On that sheet of paper.
Some parts were splendidly written,
Others scribbled in messy longhand.
Some parts made me laugh,
Made me cry,
Kept me waiting,
Or made me sigh.
One day I'll turn to my granddaughter
And tell her what my granny said to me
She'll smile wearily and humor me
but in time she'll see what I mean

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Overheard at a Funeral

“I’m so sorry.”

“She was a wonderful woman, we all loved her dearly.”

“She was always a gracious hostess, a good cook.”

“I’ll miss her so much, I know you will too.”

“Don’t she look pretty all laid out—but who picked out her clothes? She hated that dress.”

“I always thought that she liked it.”

“She wore it only once, to a wedding I think, It was Louise Clayton’s daughter’s wedding In the summer of ‘89.”

“’90. I distinctly remember that wedding— after all, how many weddings have the best man faint in the middle of the prayer?”

“It is such a tragedy that she died.”

“A tragedy, that’s what it is!”

“Her son and daughter-in-law gave me all of her clothes, since we wore the same size in things.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

Talk to Me Like Autumn

“Nothing, but they said that she would have wanted me to have them.”

So?”

“How can they know what a dead woman wants?”

“That’s a morbid thing to say.”

“No, it’s not.”

“Did you ever think that we’d see her dead? The youngest in our circle of playmates?”

“Sooner or later we’ll all have to go.”

“Do you think it’s right to talk of this now?”

“We’ll all go—one by one.”

“It’s so awful to think that we all grew up together—and got married at the same time—and had children the same ages—and now just look! The first of us has gone.”

“Better first than last.”

“Maybe she’ll meet us when we get there—at the end of the tunnel, robed in white.”

“Our dear girlhood friend, an angel!”

“Fancy that!”

“There were six of us then, there are five now—then four—then three—then two—and then just one.”

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“And the last one shall go too and there will be none.”

“No, there will be six of us again. For we’ll all be together in heaven. The five of us here talking now, and the one—dear one—that we buried today.”

“Oh,
how utterly lovely!”

“The circle would
be whole again.”

“I heard your tummy growl.”

“I’m so hungry.”

“Let’s get some strawberries.”

“We just buried a dear friend, and now we are going to eat strawberries, like on any other day?”

“Relax, my darling.
She would have wanted it this way, you know.”

My Parents' Wedding Day

“Susan?”

“What?”

“When was your happiest day?”

“It was the day my parents got married.”

“You were not even alive yet!”

“I was sixteen!”

“You were sixteen? What do you mean by that?”

“Well, you see, Larry, it was common-law.
A common-law marriage, I mean.”

“I see.”

“They lived together and *acted* married
and everyone thought that they were—
they told people they had swallowed their rings;
or in an accident they had been lost—
and no one knew that they were not married.”

“But didn’t anyone ever find out?”

“Eventually—when I was sixteen.
That year my mother was dreadfully sick
and we came very close to losing her.
She grabbed death’s door by the doorknob
but my father pried it out of her hands
and finally the fever broke for good.”

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“They say that Doc Harris worked miracles;
and I’ll be damned to hell if he didn’t.
Like when my sister fell off of that horse—
we had started planning her funeral
when the doctor brought her around again.
But, now, go on with your story, Susan.”

“So then my father held her in his arms,
and said, ‘Lizzie, thank God you didn’t die,
if you had, I couldn’t have buried you—
I couldn’t have buried you under my name
because it is not legally *your* name.
Lizzie darling, will you be my bride?’”

“Well, Susan, what did she say?”

“Yes, of course!”

“So—your parents finally got married.”

“And, oh, it was the most amazing thing!
and the October sunset made them young—
‘twas like they were little children again—
like all of those years had been erased
by that blinding moment of true love—
Isn’t it *wonderful*, Larry?”

“It is.”

“How—love can blossom again after all
after all of those things and all those years—
I think all love should be like that, don’t you?”

“Susan?”

“Larry?”

“Would you marry me?”

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Growth

A forbidding wall stands
Solidly
Unmoving
Comprised of brick and mortar
With a delicate flower beside it
Never tall enough to leap
And bound over.

Only those seldom passersby
Are lucky enough to see this flower
Shyly lovely
With stunted growth
That dresses up this
Rigid
Frigid
Wall
And makes it beautiful.

A sacred hand
Must pick this flower
And let it grow freely
In unquenched air
But it must have soil
To plant its roots
And give it a wall
To lean upon
And hold her up.

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Fourteen

Fourteen
Does not command respect
Or authority
It is scoffed at
As young
And immature
But it isn't true
Fourteen
Is the age of discovery
About what has happened
What is happening
And what is yet to come
Fourteen
Becomes interested
In the rest of the world
In the opposite sex
In itself
In what it is
What it was
And what it can be.

My Only Religious Poem

You are my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
You are my genius and inspiration;
Who else shall I hold dear?
You are possessor of my spirit;
Of my body, mind, and soul;
And when death comes, I needn't fear it;
For it will not take a toll.
You will guard me as I slip away;
And as I advance to my final home;
My body might rot and decay;
But my spirit will forever roam.
And you are truly my dearest friend;
For you will be with me at the very end.

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Spring

The equinox has come at last;
And the sky is turning blue;
At long last, winter has passed;
And is replaced by morning dew.
The birds are singing once again;
And the grasses grow;
I hear the pitter-patter of the rain;
Replacing the winter snow.
The lonely violets poke out of the ground;
And roses begin to bloom;
So many flowers growing all around;
That there isn't any spare room.
And at last, spring is here;
We feel safe: there is nothing to fear.

Reminiscing

“Julia, I was just thinking.”

“Of what?”

“Of the day when we first met each other.”

“I remember it like it was yesterday.
You in that horrible white coat and tails—
like you were Mozart’s long-lost twin brother—
and I in ugly orange taffeta.”

“I did not look like Mozart, Julia.”

“Yes, you did. We have pictures to prove it.”

“You always took awful pictures—”

“Did not!”

“Don’t get defensive with *me*, Julia.
You always got your fingers in the lens—
Cut off a head, or forgot the lens cap—
your pictures always looked like big pink blobs.”

“Well, well, I am amazed at you, Thomas.

Insult my pictures, why don’t you—”

“Honey...”

“Do *not* ‘honey’ me, I’m too old for that.
Besides—Janie Dobson took the pictures.”

“Janie? That homely little freckled girl?”

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“Thomas! Her sister was homely, not she!
Mamie was her sister.”

“No, Julia.
I know it for a fact—Janie was homely.”

“Your father went senile at fifty
And, you, Thomas, are only forty-three,
you have seven years memory to go.”

“Julia!”

“Don’t get upset. I’m sorry.”

“Just be glad my father was decent.
Remember Mr. Dobson, Julia?
Got drunk on his own daughter’s wedding day,
and then he got sick all over the cake.”

“How could I forget? Poor Janie and Dave...”

“Janie married Dennis.”

“No, it was Dave.”

“Julia, you would fight with a signpost!”

“Fine then! Let’s test that memory of yours!
Maybe then you will stop crowing so much.”

“Go ahead, ask me anything at all.”

“Well, what did we have for supper last night?”

“Roast beef and broccoli.”

“Cauliflower.”

“It was broccoli!”

Talk to Me Like Autumn

“No, it was not!
Not unless it had mold growing on it.
And there was not a trace of mold, Thomas.”

“I ate more than you did. You picked at it.
Men appreciate meals more than women.”

“But I was the one that cooked it—”

“So what?”
“You used to appreciate my cooking.”

“I still do, Julia. Really.”

“You do?”

“I married you because you could cook well—
and you always had a beautiful smile—
and your eyes sparkled and your laugh bubbled—
and even if we never had children,
we still had each other through it all.”

“Oh, Thomas, I...”

“What is it, Julia?”

“I don’t care how senile you become—
but as long as you know why you love me
then I will always know why I love you.”

“There are some things you can never forget.”

Rae Marcus

NOOSE

Society is squeezing a noose around my neck tighter and tighter every day there is
always something I can't do or say or see or read or think or talk about
just because of who I am or who I am not because of what people
my age are like or what people of my gender and color are
like or have done in the past you know what I find it
funny in a sick way how they try our entire youth
and childhood to block us from the horrors
of real life and things in the outside
world so that when we get there
our naivete makes us stupid
and we do the wrong thing
as the noose society
places gets tighter
and tighter
tighter
tighter
tgr
tgr
tr

No Name Lives Forever

No name lives forever,
In all its' glory and fame,
Born in August, dead in November;
And then forgotten is your name.

Anyone can be a name in the news,
But hardly anyone can stay,
They can moan and groan and sing the blues,
But only the luckiest dogs get their day.

A name can live for a long, long time,
In school and history books,
But eventually the name evolves out of rhyme,
And prose gets fewer looks.

No name stays glorious forever,
Eventually the tarnished star will fall,
Many will say you existed never,
And you'll soon be forgotten by all.

Eventually all names go from gold to dust,
No matter how long one may remember,
And you force yourself to remember thus:
No name lives forever.

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Ingrid Bergman, Queen Elizabeth, and Meg

MOTHER: Do you really want to hear the story?

INGRID: Yes, Mother.

ELIZABETH: I really do.

MEG: Pretty please?

MOTHER: Oh, well, I suppose. How bad can it be?
When I was a little girl my best friend
was Meg, with long brown hair and brown eyes too
she was far, far lovelier than I was,
and she loved roses more than anything.

MEG: You named me for her, Mother?

MOTHER: Yes, I did.

INGRID: Well what about me?

MOTHER: We'll get to that soon.

ELIZABETH: And me, too, Mother?

MOTHER: In good time, my dear.
Now—Meg loved all her roses very much—
they were all named after famous people—
like Barbara Bush and John Kennedy.
Her favorite color was pink, you see
and her favorite rose was also pink—
Queen Elizabeth.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

ELIZABETH: That's what I'm named for!
It is so lovely to be called after
A rose—something so sweet and beautiful,
So innocent, yet, oh, so romantic.

INGRID: You are so fanciful, Elizabeth!
What is so wonderful about a rose?

MOTHER: Do not scoff at her, Ingrid my darling,
for you as well are named after a rose.

ELIZABETH: You see?

MOTHER: After the Ingrid Bergman rose.
You see, dear, she was a famous actress—
very beautiful and so talented—
that they called a deep red rose just for her.
And the Ingrid rose was my favorite.

INGRID: But what does all of this nonsense have to
do with the story of your child-hood friend?

MEG: Be quiet, Ingrid, and see what comes next.

MOTHER: I will ignore those outbursts, *mes petites*,
for now at least. I must go on with this.
The two roses were next to each other
in Meg's beautifully tended little garden
where we would run and play 'most ev'ry day
when we got older we would sit outside
and sew or talk or sing by the roses
and they bloomed with us as we grew up.
You know, you girls are blooming like roses.

MEG: What do you mean?

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ELIZABETH: I know what she means, Meg.
Each of us are roses at stages—
Meg, the bud, just waiting to open up,
the youngest and most innocent daughter.
And me, well, I'm just beginning to bloom
the middle daughter, beginning to live.
And Ingrid, now, is almost fully bloomed
almost old enough to leave home for good.

MEG: Oh, I feel so trivial as a bud
Yet I feel so expectant, like I am
waiting—waiting for life to open up
its' great big door and let me come in—
like I have a key that I cannot find—
but when I find it, I can go inside.

INGRID: But at least you have not gone inside yet—
You have your childhood to live out still!
You will not miss it until it is gone, dear,
and, alas, by then, it will be too late!
For then you have entered maturity
the sweet but yet sad land of no return
for once you have entered inside the door
you can never go back and be a child,
you can never run barefoot in the heat—
or forget your manners and yell out loud.
For now you must be proper—dignified
you can only wish for childhood again.

ELIZABETH: But I, sisters, am on the very brink
maturely immature, stupidly smart
An oxymoron of moxyoron—
little contradiction in terms.
I want to be one—or be the other—
just not on this little line anymore!
For there is nothing expected, and no
guide, a manual, or even a friend

Talk to Me Like Autumn

you can truly turn to in this time.
It is like walking an uncharted path.

MOTHER: Ah, my three daughters, so wise and so young!
Let me tell you what happened to lovely Meg—
She came down with scarlet fever, poor dear,
And though she clung on to life it let go—
and it pulled her out of Life and into Death,
only sixteen, her whole life in front of her—
the yet unknown happiness and triumphs—
all taken away by the cruel man in black.
And they let me choose her burial spot—

ELIZABETH: 'Twas between Elizabeth and Ingrid!

MOTHER: Precisely right my dear, we buried her
on Sunday morning, just after mass,
between the pink and the red—so dif'rent,
yet in so many ways they were alike.
It was like me and Meg—a—a contrast!
One sweet, frail, timid, and shy—the other
never afraid to speak her mind out loud.

ELIZABETH: I think I see why you gave us these names.
For our Meg is your Meg, timid and shy,
and I am the pink Queen Elizabeth—
not quite red—but, yet, not quite white either
and Ingrid is just like her namesake rose—
Bold and boisterous, yet beautiful too.

MOTHER: That is a beautiful observation
but you must wait until I am finished.
Where Meg was laid to rest, a rose sprung up—
Not red, not pink, not quite any color—
what you would call a hybrid—and it sprung
watered by our tears, growing out of her—
and so then it became the third rose—Meg.

Rae Marcus

INGRID: Two extremes, and then one left in between!
It's marvelous, Mother, that's what it is!
Each of us is the rose we're named for—
We do not represent it, we *are* it!
For I am Ingrid Bergman, bold and red—
and Elizabeth is the pale pink Queen—
and Meg is our contrast, right in between.

MOTHER: My three little roses—bigger each day.

The Four Seasons

The sun-god and the moon-goddess had four daughters; close in age, also close in heart; One day they were summoned to hear their fate, sent to the golden temple of the sun; where the King of the Gods waited for them; waited to change their lives.

Spring came forward first, the eldest of the four, with golden hair and flashing green eyes, her skin as white as the whitest magnolia petal.

“Stand before me!” said the King of the Gods, “What is your name, girl?”

“I am Spring,” said she.

“And, Spring, what is your ambition?”

“I want to be a mother. I want to be a healer and make things better that were hurt— I never want to see the same thing twice— to give Youth—and to give Hope.”

“How noble an ambition that is, fair girl Spring! And I, King of the Gods, say it will be— For you will be season of things renewed— When the coldness ends and life comes again. We will call this season *Spring*, and you shall walk the Earth these three months with a crown of purple pansies—sweet royal flower. Zephyr, gentle West Wind, shall be your friend, And you shall follow him robed in moss-green.”

Rae Marcus

She could find but two words to say: “Thank you.”

The King did not reply, but he beckoned her sister Summer come forth and face him. Many thought her more fair than Spring, with her same golden hair, sea-blue eyes, and tan skin. “Now, Summer, what do you aspire toward?”

“I want everyone to like me—and I want to have time for all the things I love—I want to have many children, running, playing at my feet, surrounded in warmth. I desire the simplest things in life.”

“You aspire well, my child, and I see that your wishes will soon be fulfilled, for you shall be goddess of the three warm months which follow the season Spring, your sister. We shall call this time *Summer*, when children are free of schoolwork, so they can play. You will wear a dress of palest pale blue; with a wreath of light pink summer rosebuds to serve as your crown. Eurus, the East Wind, the kind and vague wind, shall accompany you, become your friend, and walk the Earth with you.”

She was so thrilled she knew not what to say. The King saw this and silenced her, saying: “Do not try to thank me, it was destined.”

The third sister did not come forward yet. The King saw her shyness and said, “Autumn?”

Slowly she stood. “I am Autumn.”

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Autumn

was fair in a different way, her auburn
hair swirling around her pale cherub face,
her eyes a deep forest green.

The King spoke:

“Your sisters have told me their ambitions,
but of yours I know nothing. What are they?”

She spoke quietly but with conviction.
“I long to be happy—and to be bustling,
with many little children who love me,
and to see unconventional splendor.
You can see I am shy—I would like to
hide—watching people, not them watching me.”

The King did not wait to speak. “Your wishes
are different than those of your sisters;
yet it fits: for your fate is different.
You shall be the season after Summer;
Called *Autumn* after you, one last bit of splendor
before the long, cold, hard season begins.
The crimson and golden leaves shall crown you;
and your dress shall be of brilliant scarlet;
And you shall have but one companion when
you are walking the terrain of Earth—the
South Wind, old Notus, with a dew-wet beard.
And you shall hide behind the trees unseen.”

Her green eyes shone.

“Enjoy your season, dear,
in all its’ good and bad.”

“I will.” she said.

Rae Marcus

Headstrong Winter stood without being told.
She was as beautiful as her sisters;
but not in the same conventional way.
she was what some would call 'bewitching', with
her midnight black hair playing up her skin;
white and perfect as newly fallen snow;
and her eyes, twin sapphires, pale icy blue.

"Tell me your ambitions," said the God King,
knowing she would tell, whether asked or not.

"I want to be a healer," said Winter,
"but not of diseases of the outside;
I want to cure the troubled inner soul;
to make mankind truly happy and good."

"It will be a difficult feat." King said.

"That makes me want to do it even more."

"Be cautious, proud Winter, let me tell you
what your destiny has decided. You
will be the goddess of the cold, barren
season which shall now be known as *Winter*,
clothed in palest grey, like Athena's eyes;
holly leaves and wintergreen berries will
together make you a crown. Boreas, the
North Wind, will follow you, tearing up trees
and causing violent storms to occur."

The girl jumped up in protest. "Why is it
this way? My three sisters have had all of
their wishes come true, why not mine? Spring is
a mother who never sees the same thing
twice, Summer has warmth and playing children;
and Autumn can be left alone. But me—
I desired more than any of them,
and my destiny is the worst. Why? Why?"

Talk to Me Like Autumn

The God-King smiled like he understood.
“But that is exactly why, Winter dear.
For you will separate the men from boys—
the wise ants from the lazy grasshoppers.
Winter is a force to be reckoned with.
You discover yourself in the winter—
the slow death before the rebirth of spring—
you have all the wonderful holidays—
it is you who will make Christmases white
and New Years’ Eves merry. You will not be
easy to love as the other seasons—
but in time they will learn to love you best.”

For once in her life Winter was silent.
“Thank you.”

“Do not thank me, thank destiny.”

Rae Marcus

Me

What am I made up of?

There's oxygen, and carbon, and water.

But there's more than that.

I have my father's eyes, and his mother's skin.

I have my grandmother's love of shopping, and my grandfather's insatiable mind.

I have my mothers' mother's love of learning and her quiet nature.

But I am made up of more than that.

I'm made up of playing Princess when I was six years old, with a baby blanket for a velvet robe and a crown made out of shiny tinfoil.

I'm the game of Old Maid in preschool, the Stars of David made out of cookie dough, and the endless hours singing "It's a Small World After All."

I'm my first slumber party, and my next-door neighbor's pet bunny rabbits.

I'm the Halloween costumes—ballerinas, angels, and flappers.

I'm the dolls I pretended were my daughters, and sang songs to, and kissed good night, and wrote stories for.

I'm the teddy bear candle that I still haven't burned, the Nutcracker dolls I break out every Christmas, and the shamashes of Hanukkahs gone by.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

I'm the Nutcracker ballet my grandmother would take me to see every year, in the favorite pink sweater she'd knitted for me, with Life Savers in her purse.

I'm the short story I sent to a publisher when I was eight.

I'm the butterscotch candies that melted in my mouth.

I'm the endless years of swimming lessons which have taught me how to barely doggy-paddle.

I'm playing Cinderella in a school play in third grade.

I'm the annual neighborhood fireworks show, a little bit shorter and less splendid every year.

I'm the rides I took on my grandfather's wheelchair.

I'm the cherry lollipops, grapefruits, and Rice Krispies—foods of my youth.

I'm the people who always told me I should live up to my potential.

I'm the daisies on my curtains that make the sunlight come in distorted.

I'm all this—and I'm much more.

I'm everything I've ever been exposed to—good and bad.

I'm a delicious and toxic combination of everything.

And all those things are together a recipe for making a unique and separate individual—

Me.

Rae Marcus

Paint for Me a World

Painter, paint for me a picture—
A picture of a happy place
Where the trees sway softly in the breeze
With an uncommon grace—

Painter, put some flowers in my picture
Red and violet and blue—
A massive sky with tiny twinkling stars
Sparkling with what is honest and true—

Paint for me a picture of the sun
With golden rays lighting up the Earth
Warming up the wondrous world
With all of its' hidden worth—

Painter, add a forest of trees
In shades of green from dark to light
Paint for me a whole New World
Make it sweet and clear and bright.

Paint for me a world
Where all is truthful and right
Where rivers are glittering blue ribbons
And the moon is silver-white.

Painter, make this world beautiful,
Make it dew-dappled and fair
So that when my own world is too ugly
I can pack up my things and go there.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

A World Without Love

A world with out love is like
A poem
That has no rhyme
Scheme
And that has no rhythm
Just sort of jumbled together with no real meaning and no point
That no one understands
And
No one
Wants to try to figure it out
Because it doesn't make any
Sense.

Rae Marcus

The Song of Suzanna Sloane

Two women stood at a burial site:
the old, dear graveyard of Chestingham town,
and saw the grave of one departed soul—
which, under the layers of dust it read—
simply, *Suzanna Sloane*.

Remembering
how unsaintly her life had been, the two
women clucked their tongues and left, but they were
the only two left in the world who knew
Suzanna Sloane's story.

They have asked me
to write it down for them, as they will not
do it themselves, but they want the future
generations to know it and learn it,
not repeat it. So the story goes:

Suzanna was born with the last name of
Morgan, daughter of a respected man,
yet he turned to drinking and turned to beast;
while his sweet little wife Susan wept, alone.
She was born on a warm day in mid-March;
the warmest day in almost thirty years.
She was an only child, lacking in
playmates; so then the Wind and Sea and Sky
became her chums, she told them stories, and
they told her some as well.

She knew of all
the shipwrecks and the sunken pirate gold
and the Wind carried news from far away;
she knew of the secrets that lets birds fly;
and what it is like to sit on a cloud.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Her father beat her mother to death one day; when his daughter was scarcely seven; but he managed to convince his daughter that “Mommy’s now an angel in heaven.” He swore off the bottle, found a new wife; fifteen years younger; the light of his life; they had three sons together, but for young Suzanna, they were not brothers but toys.

People got married quite young in those days; and soon Suzanna was sixteen years old. She was the prettiest girl in the town, with long, curly brown hair and round blue eyes and a boy started to come call on her—the boy her mother had long ago said would be her perfect match, the boy who she picked out.

His name was Arthur Sloane—and he was strong, good-looking, wealthy, and tall—all the girls in Chestingham town were jealous. But there was another man—young William—who truly captured her sensitive heart—she gave up to him her heart, and a great deal else, the night before he left for war. Arthur left too and made her swear that she would wait for him ‘til he returned.

But, later, it was discovered, that young Suzanna would in nine months get a gift—from William, who weeks later would be killed.

Her father was furious and sent her away, to an Aunt Dot two states away she would hide away while her shame increased; as for the baby—she would give birth and then give it away, and come home unchanged; so that nobody would ever need know.

Rae Marcus

And thus the plan was carried out, baby
girl went out to a poor childless couple;
Aunt Dot bid goodbye, Suzanna went home.

Arthur came back from war, and Suzanna
was a glowing bride, in virginal white;
at eighteen she became Suzanna Sloane.
The Sloanes were wealthy and respectable;
and they had several children of their own;
and they were happy for so many years;
until something came to change all of that.

A girl appeared in town one day, she said
her name was Grace, searching for her long-lost
mother, named Suzanna Morgan.

Alas,

Mrs. Suzanna Morgan Sloane was found;
and the whole hidden truth finally came out;
the town gasped aloud in slander and fraud;
but they discovered the story was true;
that William Black and Suzanna Morgan
had long ago borne a bastard daughter.

Arthur left her, took her children away;
began seeing a widow from Smithtown;
and a few weeks later she died in grief:
Suzanna was dead of a broken heart.
Grace went back to her "parents and family";
she vowed she would never return again;
to the town where she had caused suffering;
and sleepless nights; and so much endless pain.

So now you, the reader, know the story
of Mrs. Suzanna Morgan Sloane, whose
true love had died so long ago, whose child
she had borne, her mother dead by her drunk
father's hand, and her name written in shame.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

So the world goes away without glory;
and you know Suzanna's song and story.
I swear by the church bells, on Sunday rung;
Never, ever, was a sadder song sung.

Frostbite

We went to see you on a Sunday
When the air smelled like Christmas
And the overburdened clouds hung low and drooping in the sky.
She felt your marble square,
Hard edged and coarse
(Nothing like the sweet soft tenderness that had once been you).
I murmured something
That could almost be called a prayer,
And she wept
Whispering of love
(The word for which there is no one definition
But millions of interpretations).

The air stung our cheeks
Chilled our bodies
And enveloped our slowly numbing hearts
Her tears stung—melting snowflakes—
And she felt again that cold gray square
With its' molded frozen marble
And harshly carved letters.
It was frigid
(Like how your body must have been
Before it met the immortal flame).
And while you warm in eternal glory
We were left here to freeze.

When We Were Golden

Yesterday when I loved you,
The stars shone silver in the sky
Our love was crimson and brightest blue,
Our own hearts seemed to fly.

Yesterday when you loved me
I saw you in a holy light
We used to sail on a sapphire sea
While the sun shone bright.

Yesterday when we loved each other
The world was united as one
Because when one person loves another
They are always in the sun.

Yesterday when we were golden
The world was golden too
When to you I was beholden
I flourished and I grew.

Tomorrow when I will forget you
The sun will continue to shine.
I will still sail on seas of blue
But now they will be just mine.

Tomorrow when I will be a new hue
I'll think back to days of olden...
When it was just you and me...
...Back when we were golden...

Rae Marcus

Choke

When you're breaking into fragments
Shards of glass
Don't let the guilty ones hold
The loose pieces of your broken soul—
Just swallow the glass.

Keep it scraping down your throat—
For wounds on the inside may scar
But the only one who sees them is you—
The guilty ones can't throw them in your eyes—
If you just swallow the glass.

Scars on the inside
Take longer to heal
But as your body grows numb
The pain gets duller
So just keep swallowing glass...

Until you choke...

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Papillon

She is a butterfly let loose in a windstorm—
Wings—flapping—
Against the current
Tossed aimlessly in the breeze
And still flying on.

She speaks only in metaphors
For an arbitrary world
In which when a great man falls
A greater rises
And when a man dies
Another is born to replace him.

She sings the forgotten hymns—
As she is caught in the spider web—
The circle of life
Is a harsh, enclosing square
And she's becoming trapped.

Rae Marcus

My Heaven

If I got to choose my heaven,
I know where it would lie—

The distant spot on the horizon
Where the ocean meets the sky.

Mother Earth's waters are dreamy and circling
With the promise of life new and renewed
Clouded with faint traces of human mystery
And primitive sources of food—

God sprawls on clouds in His palaces
Land where those lost return home again
On the skyline he meets his muse, the Mother,
Joined as one, for love and pain—

I hope to pass in the calm after a storm
When He and She reconcile their fight,
When sky and sea are matching hues of pearl-gray
And the world prepares for calm night.

As the sun sets I shall go too
To where the oceans meet the skies—

Where sky and Earth joins their gates
Is where my heaven lies.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Prima Donna

On the stage you play a role—
A debonair ladies' man
(So just hide your lonely soul
And continue as best you can).

To the entire world you hide the truth
Under a mask of grace
I see it there—it I soothe—
I know the scars upon your face.

Wait until the rose wilt
And the stage lights all dies out
Then you can reveal your shame
And I'll erase my doubt.

You are an actor upon life's stage,
Into illusion you embark—
Not 'til the curtain falls do you engage
To kiss you're leading lady in the dark.

I'll stay until the bows are done
And they've locked all the doors—
When you're done with your time in the sun
Maybe I can be yours.

unwelcome

You offered me your heart on a silver platter—
And I held it in my hand.
It bled on me
And it bled on your sleeve
Where it had been displayed.

Your heart was too pale for my liking—
Empty of ambition,
Weak and careless;
It didn't match my tastes—
Yet it was so frostily delicate
That it broke in my hands.

The blood of your heart stained me
Tarnished me
And made me unclean.
It stayed invisible upon me
Unable to be washed off
Or covered up,
Contaminating all that I touch:
My food is bitter.

I never meant to break your heart—
But it crumbled in my grasp
And I could find nothing
To hold it together,
So you'll just have to fix it
By yourself.

Claustrophobia

The door was open just a crack
But you shoved your way in
Ate my food
Drank my wine
Slept in my bed
And then asked my permission.
I never said I'd let you in
But you came anyway
You wore my clothes
Read my books
Bathed in my tub—
Forced your way into my life.

I want to push you out
And slam a lock shut
On the door of this home
That contains my soul.
This house of mirrors contains me
And my spirit
Both were glass and you shattered it—
Piece by piece you chipped away
Until I fell apart.

I want to push you out of my house
And never again let my ears hear
Your voice
Shattering the glass
And the words
Gnawing at my soul.

Rae Marcus

But I cannot force you out—
My hands are tied by your bristled ropes.
They tell me you are safe—
Nontoxic—
And they tell me not to be afraid
As their breath
Knots the ropes.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

L'actrice

The world is but a stage
And I am the star!
My role is difficult—
I range from tormented teen
To grieving relative
And helpful friend.
I can laugh and cry on cue—
I'm the greatest actress ever!
Every word I say is believable
Because I am who I play.
My life is the brilliant play
That I never got around to writing
And my character is the perfect role
That I wasn't typecast for.

Rae Marcus

Mirror Worship

Powders and pencils
Beads and pearls
Ribbons and laces
I bury myself

Silks and gauzes
Satins and velvets
Golds and silvers
I shroud myself:

Because the less you see
Of what I really am
The more you see
Of what you think I am
How lovely I am
And how beautiful I want to be
For you

Kaleidoscope

All that is left of me are
millions of fragments of glass
glittering—
vibrant
dull
large
and small—
by the touch of your hand
I rearrange
into new patterns
beautiful
and hideous.

I keep falling—
from your hands
or into them—
but if you are not careful
I'll keep falling
with all of my pretty pieces
into the black hole
where you cannot shake me
any more.

Rae Marcus

Caged Angel

They caged the angel again.

She has done no wrong—
But they don't want her to ever have the chance
So they slammed shut the lock.

She sees the other angels walking free
Alongside martyrs, devils,
And those destined for Purgatory.

She grows so thin
That she slips through the bars
And can finally go through.

She becomes nocturnal,
Roaming at night—
For the world looks different when lit by the moon.

They found the angel
And brought her back in chains.
They caged the angel again.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Arc de Ciel

I am raining
Drops of misery
Like empty tears.

You are sunny
Rays of light
Like golden beacons.

You are shining on me
And my rain
Evaporates
As I change colors
Lighting up our world
With red
Yellow
And blue.

Rae Marcus

Toy Soldiers

I stand before you
In my fancy finery
Alongside the others.

We stand shoulder to shoulder
In a line, waiting our turn
To become your plaything.

Each of us is a tin soldier
Played with until we bore you
Or won't play your games any more.

All the other little soldiers
Watch as we are tossed away
And eagerly claim our old places in line.

Each tries to be novel
Hoping that they will be
The toy that you want to keep—

But you are merely a little boy
Who easily grows finicky
And tires of all your toys.

At last the soldiers that are not too damaged
Manage to pick up their feet—
Turn away and march on.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Encased

I am the valuable jewel
Gleaming in the center of your crown—
So much worth and value
That you must protect me.

You keep me locked securely in a glass case
Where nothing can harm me—
Don't touch me!
Don't breathe on me!
Don't mar this beauty
That you think I have!

As long as I am here
In my glass box
I touch nothing
And nothing touches me.
As long as I am away from the world
You may sit and watch me—
Rationing out my oxygen
And sunshine
And admiring me like an animal
In a beautiful glass zoo...

And as long as I have
My idyllic little glass world
I am always of value to you.

Rae Marcus

Porcelain Doll

You grew tired of your porcelain doll
So you kept her in a glass case
And bought me to be
Your new toy to play with.

You liked the way
That I wasn't delicate
You were able to toy with me
Throw me in the air
And neglect me—
Like you never could have done
With your porcelain doll.

You loved the way
That you could toss me around
And I would never fracture
Or suffer any pain—
The way that I would have
If I were your porcelain doll.

But as soon as you were bored with me
You flung me carelessly aside
And cuddled again
Your beautiful porcelain doll.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Numb

Pins and needles may prick at me
Hoping to pierce my skin
But what appears to be so thick
Is actually quite thin.

I just block out all the pain and sorrow
As if it weren't there
All the while picking away at my skin
And pulling out my hair.

Wounds left untreated can only grow
Deeper as time goes on
And I bleed quietly all over myself
And am resigned to being misfortune's pawn.

After awhile I lose resistance
And blood comes out in spurts
Because when someone keeps pricking at me
Eventually, it hurts.

Rae Marcus

Brown Prophet

I saw you in a crowd
a shadow—
melting into the sea of others
yet shining so brilliantly
that a thousand suns
could not eclipse you.

But the dark night came at noon
just as soon as it had risen
whisking you off on a cloud
a beam of moonlight
the vengefully ominous red curtain
brought to an end the final act
and denied an encore—
taking you to where dreams lie asleep.

All of you that's left
in this drowning mortal world
is a shadow
of the sun that once was there
to light up our world.

Terrifying Illusion

I had the funniest nightmare last night—
I dreamed that I couldn't dream
And then was forced into the cruel reality
That is everyday life—

I dreamed that I couldn't dream
My way out of the desolation
And never had escape valves
Or ambitions to carry my thoughts.

I dreamed that I couldn't dream
So I had to pull my head from the clouds,
Accept the world as it was
And conquer it—

But I fortunately awoke
And shook off that horrid dream
And worked my way back
Into my poisoned reality.

Rae Marcus

State of Mind

Fate laughs at me.

She stands like a fairy in the moonlight
In an ankle-length dress
Made of cream-colored gauze

Her hair is tied up in knots
Full of deep purple pansies

When she shakes her head
To scold my foolish actions
The flowers fall to her feet
Like my forgotten dreams—

She has frozen me
Into a fragment of my scarred memory
From which my mind has moved on
But my heart is still trapped—

In the moment which I awoke
In a full house—
And I was alone...

Fate cries for me.

Disintegration

I am a deflated balloon,
a wilted flower
standing in the middle of a crowded room
screaming
and no one hears me.

I eat when I am not hungry
forcing down false nourishment
instead of love and caring—
drinking when I am not thirsty
hoping to swallow your bitter apathy.

Rae Marcus

For Which 'Love' is Too Simple a Title

Love cannot be created
Or destroyed—
It simply is
Existing
Without excuses
Or apologies
Embracing the ones who believe
And running from those who do not.

It often goes to where it is not needed
Or wanted
Like a frightened child
Awaking from a nightmare.
It moves
Gently to some
Harshly to others—
In any shape it chooses
And often it goes warmly to the ones
Who have sworn it off
Because it likes
To prove them wrong.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Reconstruction

You chipped away at my heart
That was made of ice
(Cold frozen glass)
But instead of melting,
It crumbled.

Yet you gathered the pieces
And reconstructed my heart
Keeping it whole
By refreezing it—
And my icy glass heart
Loves you.

Rae Marcus

Balancing Act

Like a funambulist
I teeter
On a thin rope
Carefully watching you.

I know which way to waver
And when I notice you
You dictate my every step
And movement.

You toss objects at me
Heavy and large
Trying your best
To make me lose my grip—
But I keep my balance.

You keep me on my toes
While I cautiously perch
Quivering at your will
Trying to make it across
Without falling...

...Into your arms...

Notoriety

I want to be as famous as Lou Gehrig
So famous that when I catch the flu
They'll name it after me:
So famous that when I go on TV,
Instead of kissing up to the newscaster
He kisses up to me.
I want to be as famous as Andy Warhol
Except for fifteen minutes longer—
Fifteen decades or fifteen millennia.
I want to be so famous
That unwilling, belligerent high school kids
Are forced to read my work,
Research my life,
And debate my merits.
I want to be so famous
That they make Cliffs Notes on my book
(That way no one will have to bother
To read it anymore).
I want to be an obscure answer on *Jeopardy!*
Or Trivial Pursuit—
The first poet with her name
On the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Rae Marcus

Overachiever

First thing in the morning
I open up my curtains
And the sun shines brightly
On the trophies
Which line my walls.

In the middle of the night
When I wake up scared
And there's no one to call
I stack up all my blue ribbons
And count them.

When all the other schoolgirls are out
Being flirty, dainty stereotypes
I sort out all of my gold medals
And polish them.

In the darkest hours of my life
I count up my medals and ribbons
Give each one a name,
And confide in them.

It never says on your resume
Whether or not you were loved
And you can't win awards
For having friends.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

In this world
You're only as good
As what you can show off
What you can win
And what it can be appraised for,
And no one can stack and count
Your happiness
When you're gone...

So the trophies are my family
And the medals my friends...

Shattered Truth

Instead of a shield
I built a glass palace
To live in.
It was my abode:
I could look out
While they could look in,
And it brought upon an era of honesty
(Because one becomes
Surprisingly aware of their actions
When one lives
In a glass house).
My truth
Was brutal and factual
Most clearly not welcome
In this propaganda world.

They cast pebbles of annoyance at me
But I retreated
To the relative safety
Of my glass mansion—
But their tiny rocks
Chipped and cracked my walls
Crenellation
And turrets.
I huddled fearfully—
A frightened mass on the floor—
While my castle crumbled at my feet
(Like acid rain coming
In splintered fragments)
And my haven of honesty
Was destroyed.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Now my glass sanctuary
Is ruined
Because honesty in its purest form
Is too harsh to be good—
And I bleed
From the gaping wounds
And scars I received
When honesty shattered upon me.

Rae Marcus

Weapons

Every man fights his own war—
With sanity
Or love
Or a machine gun—
And I fight mine.

I am trying to move mountains
And destroy diseases
With words
Trying to conquer fears
And eliminate hatred
With sentences.

Pens scribble lazily
And papers blow away on the wind
Because words can be erased
Sentences can be deleted
And each man fights his war
Alone.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Mercy

Each sacred snowflake
Like a delicate angel
Descends from the glory of the heavens
To the lonely earth below—

Silver and opaque
Loose pieces of glass
They catch the light
And glitter like jewels.

The tiny kisses of cupids
Like miniature diamonds
Alight to the surface
Of the guilt-ridden world.

They land
And are left to melt
On the filthy concrete
Into obsolete puddles of nothing—

Because while snow
Is beautiful
And delicate...

Still

It

Falls

Rae Marcus

Candlelight

On my darkest of days
She handed me a candle:

Her life filtered from her heart
Into a pen
Hope dripping from her soul
Onto a page

On the darkest of my days
She gave me a candle
Illuminating my lonely spirit
With the tiniest—
But sweetest—
Of lights.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

February Angel

February has always been
Vicious to me
She likes to be sunny
For a few brisk days
And then as soon as
I pack up my downy sweaters
She blasts gusts of chilly wind
Into my face—
But this time
The cold wind brought with it
My February angel
Who nestled me
Into his warm arms
To save me from the harsh frost
Of the February world.

Rae Marcus

Reflection

Shining and sparkling
She is a lake
Cool serenity in the night
And warm vibrancy
Under the sun.

The people adore her
And flock to her—
She encompasses recreation,
Leisure,
And happiness.

As we take careful steps to her
Discovering her
We slowly wade
And immerse ourselves—
The deeper we go
The more we find
Slowly clearing
Yet clouded beneath
Her beautiful surface

She reflects us all
In those watery eyes
Of blue and green—
We see in her our own
Hopes
Dreams
And promises—

We all love her water
And want to dive in—
Swimming—
Through her soul.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Appeal

piece by piece
inch by inch
you are pulling away
the layers

you are
peeling me
slowly removing
my coatings

uncertainty
distrust
self-loathing
jealousy

you are
peeling me
and you discard
my old skins

you ignore
what I feign to be
and strip away to
my core

I shed
like the growing snake
and you are
my naive eve

you found my core
before it rotted
and my mounds of hatred
were peeled away

Rae Marcus

now I have nothing
between my sensitive core
and the world
but you

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Refrain for Requiem

I remember when you told me
To always reach for the moon
And never settle for a star

The lord is my shepherd

I remember when you told me
To aim for number one
And never accept less

I shall not want

I remember when you told me
To climb straight to the top
And never look back

I will fear no evil

I remember when you told me
To stand up for my beliefs
And never give in

For thou art with me

I remember when you told me
To cling tight to my dreams
And never let go

Ashes to ashes

I remember when you told me
That the pain was too much
And you were giving in

Dust to dust

Rae Marcus

Aloe

I am itching all over
Because of you
Because you used to be my life-moisture
And I am dry without you

My sharpened fingernails
Scratch away at my decayed surface
Hoping to find you buried
Beneath my sandpaper surface

The water which once healed me
Now hurts me
My skin is raw and open
Caked with sores from you

Each day that passes
Marks another eternity
Which I have wasted
Away from you

As another set of 24 hours clicks past
The days of our love grow farther away
Like a spot on the horizon
That disappears as you run from it

I want you to be my aloe
Heal me from the outside in
And bring the moisture of life
Back into my dying flakes of skin

The World Ends in June

The world seems to end in June;
And begin again in September;
When it's ending—we want it to go soon;
But when it's gone—we want it to last forever.

First the school year comes to an end;
And everyone scatters around the world;
The road of life reaches another bend;
Many dreams come true—or are unfurled.

In June, springtime bids farewell;
And takes its' green winds away;
Summer then comes and its' voices tell—
Gone forever is yesterday.

And then—in September—we begin again!
When autumn at last comes our way;
New loves and adventures, foes and friends;
Time to begin another day.

When June comes, some of us are caring
While others of us are cold;
December and January have no bearing;
For June is when the world truly grows old.

Rae Marcus

Bernadette Wednesday

Still waters
Evaporate
She collects raindrops
In her hair

Mother keeps
Calling out her name
The grass is greener
Underneath
She gathers rainbows
In her sleeves

Beauty is in the eye
Of the blind
It feels like it will be Wednesday
Forever
She tucks summer
Behind her ears

Transparent sky
Someone stole the sunset

When there's a will
There's a way out
She swallows autumn
And fills her pocket
Full of children.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Pool

Let's go be toxic together

I hit the eight ball in the side pocket
And you made a scratch

We laughed at the kids in the pool
Who couldn't tell that they were drowning
In life

Blue cue ball
Too much chalk
Blue swimmers
Too little air

They swim laps to nowhere

Let's go poison each other

A little dissatisfaction
Goes a long way
And the lifeguard's whistle
Isn't loud enough

Sharks are coming
Thirteen ball in the corner pocket

Rae Marcus

Laurie

I walked on forever
Aimless and blind
Without a destination
My subconscious hoping
That I might find you along the way

Your voice rustled in the wind
Your eyes melted into the sky
But I still could not accept
That your body wasn't there

I looked out the highest window
And watched the shore stretch out forever
The entire world was shrinking
As I floated upwards
To find you...

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Water Love Drug

After years of starvation
I come upon a feast
And gorge myself
Until I am sick

When a sudden sliver of rain
Falls upon my head
I drown myself in it
Reveling as I choke

Come closer to me
My water love drug
Let me swim
In your brief flood

Rae Marcus

The love of your life

I remember when I was
The love of your life

What a worthy accomplishment for a girl to be
The love of your life

I was always the first to know when I was
The love of your life

It didn't matter who I really was when I was
The love of your life

I completed you when I was
The love of your life

I was you when I was
The love of your life

It was so beautiful while I was
The love of your life

But I lost myself when I stayed as
The love of your life

And though I used to be
The love of your life
Now you can't look me in the eye

It's hard to go from being
The love of your life
To being
The catch of the day

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Channel Surfing

Social activism
And spiked heels
Are in this season
But don't be caught dead
With charm bracelets
Or genuine concern

I can see
That you are furious
To be paying me to tell you
What you already know

Sorry
We're not friends today
But please try again tomorrow

Happiness for sale!
Hurry
Buy now and we'll throw in a free chia pet

God died today
But first
An interview with your favorite disgraced star

So you don't like your friends?
Throw them away and buy new ones

Rae Marcus

Tell me when to laugh
Tell me when to cry
Tell me whom to like
Tell me what to do—
I'm counting on you

Now, class, what did we learn today?

Don't worry, all our problems will be solved in thirty minutes or less
or the pizza's free.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Archaeologist Mother

You want to dig up
The ruins of Athens
And the hidden temples of Cairo;
The bones of history
And the heart of civilization.

You want to unearth
Warm sunny kitchens
Full of Southern comfort food
And beloved mothers
In gingham aprons.

You want to discover
The beauty of an expectant life
Which you have yet to live;
And the wonders of a world
Which you have yet to explore.

And I hope you find
Your Atlantis.

Rae Marcus

The Conquered

Like Alexander I once grieved
That there were no new worlds
To conquer—
But you became my terra incognita

I want to scale your peaks
Discover the treasures and resources
Of your farmlands;
Cross your rivers
And then build bridges.

I shall map you
Name you
Colonize you
And place my flag atop your crest
In order to show the world
That I conquered you first,
And then leave on my next
Expedition.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Baltimore Moon

I know you best
In the green before twilight

(You always dreaded the dawn).

The things I don't understand
I enjoy the most

(You taste sweet like lemons).

You keep trying
To hold the river in your hands

(You are all the choices).

I look into the mirror
And see you staring back at me

Rae Marcus

Rapunzel

We fell in love as the lead actors
In a romantic play:

You were the valiant hero;
Prince on a white steed
Swimming the shark-infested moat
To rescue me

I was the damsel in distress;
Princess trapped in a tower
Tossing out a rope of my hair
To find you...

And we rode off into the sunset...

The play had a happy ending
And everybody clapped
But how it hurt to discover
That we had loved the characters all along

Talk to Me Like Autumn

GURU

He liked to recycle the same few ideas
Over and over again;
Tricking everyone into believing
In his brilliance

He held me close
And tried to convince me
That everything I had always known
Was a lie

He explained just because
They've been telling you something
For your whole life
That doesn't make it true

He held my hand in his
While he calmly denied the existence
Of everything
I loved

He left me for
Higher intellectual pursuits
All the while urging me
To rethink what I felt

He was right
Nothing (he said) is true
One plus one
Equals zero

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Love
Love
Love
Love
Love
Love
Love
Love
Love

Doesn't it sound stupid
When you say it so much?

Ill way

The temporary panaceas
Wore off
And soon you were fumbling,
Grasping for anything
That would hold you up
While knocking you down.
Once when I stumbled
You caught me before I fell
But if in the same situation—
Roles reversed—
I don't know if I would be strong enough
To catch you.

We said our eyes were wide open
But we couldn't even see the road in front of us
And we got tired of saving things
For a day that would never come.
Two rags dolls together
Cannot stand tall:
Both trying to steer
And neither succeeding.

If I had anything whole left to offer
I could give you money or gifts or help
But all I have left are broken memories
And good advice

That neither of us will take.
If this was a Middle Ages dance of death,
I think that you would be leading—
Driving in circles through oblivion
Trying to find the one safe port left
That isn't on the map.

Slowly the once-anticipated days
Are dying away like the trees we watch
Molting in the suburbs,
A wispy haze of brown-eyed girls
And hazel-eyed girls

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Colored so by overzealous psychoanalysis
Of what used to be.
Our open-ended ambitions
Trail off into the black horizon
Like forgotten promises sailing away
On the cold wind;
Traveling along the everlasting plain prairie
That extends for miles in every direction
But up.

Rae Marcus

vagabond

I don't want to belong anywhere.

I don't want to be able to walk into the same restaurant
Monday through Friday
And get my usual.

I don't want to go and pray in churches
Where everyone already knows what I am praying for
And what I have sinned against.

I don't want to wake up every morning for the rest of my life
In the same bed in the same room in the same house
On the same street in the same city in the same state.

I don't want to walk down the street
And know the names and occupations and birthdays
Of every person I encounter.

I don't want to have the phone ring
At the same time every day
And I already know just who is calling.

I don't want to be able to pronounce
Everything on the menu
Or the phone book.

I don't want to watch the same sunset
Or feel the same emotion
Twice.

I don't want to run out of things to see
Or people to meet
Or lovers to leave.

I don't want to know a sense of security

Talk to Me Like Autumn

The kind when I can tell exactly what will happen
When I wake up.

I don't want to forget
That there is a whole New World
Beyond what I already know.

I don't want to ever call someplace home.

Rae Marcus

Tiptoes

Maybe if the wind was just right
And I imagined hard enough
I could climb into
An Edgar Degas pastel.

There I am the forlorn girl
With a clump of black for hair
And a stroke of rosy pink
As my one exposed cheek.

There is a man watching us silently
Stand back girls, says Madame,
He is a pedophile or an artist
Or some other societal waste.

In this garment of flimsy white,
The purest color,
I am not a quiet French girl—
I am a swan.

A few more twists of the pastel chalk
And I am immortal
On my tiptoes
Poised and waiting...

'Song' and a Bunch of
Possessive Pronouns

All the world was off-key
Until you taught me the difference
Between lead guitar
And rhythm

But I'm afraid
That no matter how well you teach me
We'll never be able to sing
A two-part harmony

Sing another silly love song
From off the radio
And I'll pretend
I've never heard it before

You offered me the only gift you knew
A song—
Which just like you
Could not be framed

You compose the music
And I'll write the lyrics,
Then maybe we can play at love
By ear.

Rae Marcus

AU REVOIR

At eye level
You were so forbidding—
An endless maze
Of history—
But I suppose that you
(Like most things)
Only seemed to be too big
For a mere mortal
Like me;
And now
Three thousand miles away
Three thousand miles above
The fog
Has lifted—
I once marveled at your monuments
Which are now but children's toys
And the supposedly endless road
Is just a broken thread—
So the higher I fly
The better I see.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Citizen Kane

Oh Grandpa, I saw your movie
And yes I loved the cinematography;
I thought the inside documentary
And the camera angles
Were perfect

Oh Grandpa, I saw your movie
And yes I got the symbolism;
And I figured out what Rosebud was
Before the end of the movie
(Just like you said I would)

Oh Grandpa, I saw your movie
And yes I heard your voice in my ear
And yes I felt you next to me
And someday when I see you again
We'll analyze Orson Welles

Oh Grandpa, I saw your movie
And I loved it
And I love you

Ingenuity

The stage of adulthood
Is lit with its neon lights;
She waits to make her entrance
And overcome her frights.

First thing, she slips into her clothes:
Business suits and faux mink stoles,
She has shed the garments of the ingenue
In order to win better roles.

Stockings, now, and high-heeled shoes,
Hair slicked back and pinned,
She takes her outgrown innocence
And tosses it to the wind.

She sprays perfume, a bit too strong,
Sucks in her cheeks and frowns,
She wears the regalia of a grownup now;
Complete with slippers and gowns.

Lastly comes the makeup mask,
Painted eyes and lacquered lips,
She squeezes into her lingerie
And practices shaking her hips.

But like any other method actress
She is still just playing a part;
To the naked eye she is an adult,
In every place but her heart.

She believes if she does the motions
And she can make the audience believe,
She will be able to become her role
And give her hidden sorrows reprieve.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

She is but the director's marionette
A child in a woman's clothes,
The observer ignores her falsity, claps heartily,
And throws her a rusted rose.

Rae Marcus

The Electric Moments

We are eagerly awaiting
The electric moments:
The early morning hours
Just after the dawn
Of love.

Before I know your anger
Or you feel my jealousy
We can live together
In the electric moments
Of unkempt innocence.

Let us cherish the time
Of the electric moments,
Before the novelty is gone,
When seeing each other is not yet
A chore;
When our spines still tingle
At every meeting.

Prior to the familiarity
And security
Come and give us comfort,
We must learn to thrive on
The electric moments.

While we are still relative strangers
To each other
And the routines
Are many months away,
Let us revel in
The electric moments.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

SO LONG GONE

From the outside
There is only a slight change
A new layer of the same color paint
And a shiny new car
Out front
But once inside I immediately see
That your ghost still haunts the house
That we left so long ago...

Somewhere your footprints are under these new flowers
In the garden
And your breath still makes little ripples
On the curtains

Unrecognizable strangers live in the rooms
That we consecrated once;
Our former abode
Is inhabited by people
Who aren't us

They painted over our walls
And recarpeted our floors
But the faint odor of our dead love
Is alive and lingering here

I only wish I could have known
That you wouldn't be kept in a tiny house
And there was no way to contain all the parts of you
Into one room
Or one life
Or one heart

There are strangers taking over where we left off
Falling into the traps
That we left behind

Rae Marcus

There Have Been Too Many Lasts (A Mirror Sonnet)

There have been too many lasts—
Days fraught with false meaning,
Given up to heaped praise and pride
When their levity is in fact small.
We make milestones out of ordinary things
Attaching worth to dying dust
Like gold made out of clay.
Meaning is given to every day
And obligingly we go where we must,
Trading diplomas and wedding rings
For any cheap trinket at all.
Open the gap of good taste wide—
Toward the future we go careening
To glorify our checkered pasts.

Insouciant
(A Mirror Sonnet)

At first I wanted to be an elegant wife,
And then, instead, a recluse,
But then I thought that whatever the Fates
Decided would be my eventual mean.
Blithely insouciant I gallantly wasted
Every day, as if each one
Was pointless as I neared my destination.
Losing my ideas and inspiration,
I squandered time and had fun,
No wine undrunk and no food untasted.
I died waiting for kismet to intervene,
And in heaven I saw this inscribed on the Gates:
“Destiny is just an excuse
For not taking control of your life.”

Rae Marcus

Let Me Call Out To You

Let me call out to you, oh my lover,
Though you are far away from me,
For my voice carries across the mountain ranges
And your heartbeats echo over the sea.

Let me call out to you, oh my lover,
As if you were beside me here,
We can pretend that we are children in love,
Innocent and free of fear.

Let me call out to you, oh my lover,
And I can dream that you will answer back,
For if our communication were to die,
My whole world would dim to black.

Let me call out to you, oh my lover,
You have missed my voice's sound
While you are so far gone from me
Exploring an exotic new ground.

Let me call out to you, oh my lover,
Speaking of being together again
Because our love makes the distance naught
And cools even the most piercing pain.

Postmodern Independence Day

We spent all afternoon
Hauling coolers and blankets
Driving around town just to find
A place to park
And then walked for miles
In search of the best spot
With a view;
We finished off all the watermelon
And argued about who would sit where,
Then complained about mosquitoes
And the heat.
As the sky dimmed,
The night exploded
And for a few brief moments our trivial lives
Were enveloped
In color
As we were reminded of all the people
Who gave their lives
So that we could squabble about seats
And insects,
Who hid with muskets in the woods
That we long since chopped down
And paved over,
Yet I think it was worth living
All that foolish year
For fifteen minutes
Of freedom.

Amber

How stupid it was of me
To think I could fit all of you
Into something so empty
Like that thin slice of phoniness
They call
A photograph—
Those pictures
Never did you justice
They never captured the way
That the sun lit up your eyes
And the wind ruffled your hair

Just from looking at the imitation
Of your face
I couldn't see all of the beauty
Lurking inside
The glowing recollections of times past
And the sorrow of those
You were unaware of
Yet to come
But maybe for just a moment
I had you preserved
Coated in amber
Exactly as I wanted you to be
And exactly as you were

Full Circle

I think I was here once before
And yet
It isn't the way I left it—
I have traveled so many roads
Since,
Somehow after all the pratfalls
And lessons
I have returned to where I
Began
As I walk through the stomping grounds
Of my youth
I am so much older than I used to be
And yet
While I follow the shadows of what had been
I am not the same thing
That I was
Even though I walked in one big loop,
I went to a higher place;
Though the path's end
Was the same as the beginning
I reached the destination I was looking for
All along
Home is such a beautiful place
Now that I have grown past it
And all the old palaces of youth
May have crumbled long ago
But in newfound wisdom
They are polished in the morning light
And contain the evolving shape
Of my life.

Rae Marcus

Why

He liked to talk about philosophy
Using over-broad metaphors
Between fits of laughing sarcasm;
Then proceed to kiss her dusky eyelashes
His breath quivering
Like expectant butterflies.
He was done with asking questions
And finished with asking why,
So they moved onto things like passion
Free thought
And willing hearts—
But soon the fire cooled
And the sun retreated
Into its lavender-gray haven:
Philosophy and love were over
And she still kept wondering why.

Southern Belle

When I look at her I conclude
That the angelic Madonna
Of famed Renaissance paintings
Must have been a Southern belle

She sits so delicately
Protected by her air of family pride
And without even the lifting of her perfect hand
The worshipping suitors fall in line

Raised on whole milk and Jesus
Combed and manicured
They all hope that she loves them somewhere
Behind the unruffled countenance

Never an unkind word
Or an impure thought
She lets them all fall in love with her
From a distance

Rae Marcus

Ten Years

It had been ten years
That felt like ten thousand
From the time that we were young lovers
To the time that we were overwrought adults

Ten years
In which I had occasionally thought of you
And wondered
What had become of you
And I remembered exactly
How your voice sounded,
The opinions that you had,
And the way we were both quite sure
That we could save the world

And finally we met again
Like from some old-fashioned movie
By accident
And I discovered in my horror
That you had changed
I was infuriated
That you had grown up
And upset to discover
That we were no longer young lovers
Anymore

So after a disappointing meeting
We both decided
That we would rather stay forever young
In memory
Than become what we were
Different
In the present

False Glow

I have driven all the light out of here
And the mirrors are full of phantoms,
But just because I have lived here all my life
Doesn't mean it is my home.

I am watching the world outside
Through an opaque curtain
Soggy trees sink low to the ground
As if doing balletic plies.

I pray for the false glow
Of the deadly lightning
Because I am tired of walking these illuminated paths
That lead to nowhere.

I can no longer distinguish
Between my tears and the rain,
But when I open the window it smells like
The day when the earth woke up.

Rae Marcus

Nature Pauses

The river
Stands still
He can only love
In the pauses
Haltingly

He walks alone
Crushing lilies
Underfoot
Wading knee-deep
In the invisible

Even angels
Forget how to fly
Stale wind reeks of
Serenity
Happiness on hold

He sings
Memories
Full of silence
The pines join for
A solemn chorus

Lucifer's Pillows

Achingly her tired muscles
Grope for something unseen
As she lies down
In a field of white grass
And prays to a god
Whose name she has long since
Forgotten

The circle she had hoped for
Was a misleading arc
That spun forever
And then tossed her
Unfeelingly
To the sea
And its exaggerated treasure

The rainbow melts away
Under the pounding heat
Of the sun
The clouds sink lower
Through the pitiful horizon
Until they are pillows
For Lucifer

The world leans to its side
And shakes her
She arises painfully
And screams with all her
Tortured blood
In a language that died
Several wars ago

Rae Marcus

Hereafter

It is the things that seem meaningless now
That will make you cry
In twenty years
And the things that you were forced to do
That made you stronger
In the long run,
It is the things that people warned you about
That you had the most fun doing
In your youth
And the things that made other people proud
That didn't mean as much
In your eyes,
It is the things that no one else knows about
That make you smile
In your mind,
And it is the things you wrote down on paper
That will be remembered
In the world.

Talk to Me Like Autumn

Dormant

Holed up in a dusky
Back alley
Of a land
That calls itself
Utopia
She reads famous works
By obscure authors
And puts on a coat
To shield herself
From the heat
While nestled in a roomful
Of flat rocking chairs
And a plastic basket
Of wax apples.
For a moment
She contemplates prayer,
But the walls are thin
And the surrounding rooms
Occupied by
Worthier souls,
So she turns up the radio
In hopes
Of drowning out
The silence:
She gave up
Before she started
And died
Before she was born.

Rae Marcus

Calliope

She crosses the street
Without hesitation
And makes all the cars
Come to screeching halts
While she
Languorously struts
At her own pace;
She is addicted to cigarettes
And her lover
(mere earthly objects
that are as empty to her
as truth);
she repaints her bedroom
every day
a new shade
to cover up
all the times before;
she buries dead flowers
in the garden
at dusk
and then dances
barefoot on the thorny soil
as if no one is looking
as if she is free.

Charcoal

For our first date
He bypassed the usual
Dinner and a movie
And took me to
An art gallery;
Where instead of lingering
Over the sketches of nude women
He pointed out
A simple charcoal
Of nothing but
A blanket,
Then raved incessantly
About the strokes
And the shading;
The way that the blanket
Looked warm and comforting
Even though
It was flat on paper:
How I wish that I could be
An artist
And create warm, comforting love
Out of cold, unfeeling
Charcoal.

Rae Marcus

Patterns

As a girl
I picked out silver
And china patterns
Planning for a courtship
And wedding
To the dream man
I had yet to meet
And chose names
For the children
I had yet to bear,
But then you
Had to come along
And throw all my lists
Out the window.

Devolution

Our lives fell from poetry
 Long ago
 After the construction
 Of the great cathedrals
 And the collapse
Of the delicate mythologies;
 We falter now
In dubious fits of language
 Too concise for novels
 But too lacking
 Of meaningful dialogue
 To create plays;
Now we reside aimlessly
In uneven and halting prose:
 Disjointed syllables
Devoid of rhyme and rhythm
 And another losing battle
In the great unending quest
 For warmth.

Rae Marcus

Unassuming and Unsung

He wants to be
The historian of our times,
To record the feats
Of the unknown heroes
In the hope
That perhaps someday
He too can be permanent

His secret
Is to live unassumingly
And trick the world
Into thinking
That he is common,
And then perform miracles
While their eyes are closed.

The Long Walk Home

The journey
Is built upon
Discovery:
Finding new
Favorite places
And soulmates
Along the way.
I do not mind
The extensive walking
Because there are
Exotic landscapes—
Once foreign,
Now familiar—
And new dialects
To master.
But the return trip
Is full of longing
And memories
Slightly tangible
But just out of reach—
The long walk home
Is made longer
By walking
alone
After leaving everything else
Behind.

Rae Marcus

Talk To Me Like Autumn

Talk to me
Like autumn

Crisp conversation
Like the breeze

Breath as wind
Cinnamon and cedar

Warm sweaters
Warm arms

Harvest moon
Wide eyes

Be my refuge
From the tempests

You and Scorpio
In the heavens

It can't always
Be summer

But we can
Stave off winter