

# When Angels Speak *of* Love

poems  


bell hooks

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New York London Toronto Sydney

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1230 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

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For information address Atria Books, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

hooks, bell.

When angels speak of love : poems / by bell hooks.—1st Atria Books hardcover ed.

p. cm.

1. Love poetry. 2. African Americans—Poetry. I. Title.  
PS35608.O594W47 2007  
811'.54—dc22

2006049882

ISBN-10: 1-4165-3823-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-4165-3823-3

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*for angels who go before,  
making ready the way—*

*The angels are so enamored of the language that is spoken in heaven, that they will not distort their lips with the hissing and unmusical dialects of men, but speak their own, whether there may be any who understand it or not.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON



# 1.

love go to my heart straight

beat beat

alive and more alive

oh time before words

and i can still remember

each touch

all every bit tenderness

only one pain

a cry to make it be

always endless bliss

## 2.

in love

there are no closed doors

each threshold

an invitation

to cross

take hold

take heart

and enter here

at this point

where truth

was once denied

### 3.

and how

she adores me

precious precious

sweet sweet

all favorite things

flesh that is my flesh

bone that is my bone

and we always be one

even at the moment

of heartbreak

surrender and separation

we know

times come again

eternal abiding love

another chance

seduced

she promises me

another chance

## 4.

in him

my twin likeness

all flesh a mirror

pentimento

palimpsest

all traces

seeds pressed

in flower beds

a diary of enchantment

his hands hold mine

keep me standing firm

ground my heart

the angel eye of love

stands guard

protects our union

we are too much one

too much each other

## 5.

when he bids me  
separate  
go home  
stop following behind  
let there be  
time without memory  
all is loss  
my soul gone  
into numb nothingness  
my body unable  
to know or move  
from this strange  
forbidden garden  
he lures me here  
where love  
will not come again

## 6.

amid cornfields

cabbage rows

hot peppers

tall tomato vines

succulent ripe hearts wail

all order

neat in nature

living to give sustenance

for wounded spirits

wild asparagus

honeysuckle trails

hanging borders

eden all would abandon

to not be alone

even in paradise

i dream you are



coming love

to resurrect me

to save me from decay

and lead me home

## 7.

love is

no soldier of fortune

no assassin

on the prowl

stalking unsuspecting hearts

each evil lurking here

takes any pleasing form

fallen angels

mock nighttime's splendor

unmasking

each remembered

connecting trace

## 8.

oh love

a serpent to find

in loss keeps

abandoned angel

innocence

set loose

this side of paradise

binds the heart

with promises

just follow

he will guide

lead home

if only he can touch

sweet sacred flesh

if only he can make

secret never to be

seen wounds

if only she will promise

never to forget

if only she always

feels the pain

## 9.

inside dark rooms

no one sees wounds

raw open quiet places

where love leaves

no trace of remembered bliss

and no one hears

my heart calling

do not forsake me

one more time

## 10.

bluegrass waterfalls

lingering taste of starch

naked earth clay

damp dark digging

fishing worms wiggle

clear moonshine

dandelion splendor

an unending heat

small wonders

awaken such lovely soul

let sorrow loose

free the heart

in deep red

this is love's memory

a poultice held

next to flesh and wound

a balm to soothe

all pain

to press against hurt

## 11.

the first taste of death

wets my hunger

i need to live each moment

in that same closing of the eyes

that same ecstasy

let me lie here

in everlasting peace

in love's embrace

let me enter sleep

with dark midnight

as my witness



## 12.

after slow death

love must clean house

choose memories to keep

and memories to let go

give each lamentation

an ear to hear

a heart to lay rest

let no soul forget

an eternity of desire awaits

## 13.

my first love  
a backwoods man  
comes smelling  
of wild things  
and too long time  
apart from the living  
armed with gun and game  
he brings his lady tender  
rabbit possum and coon  
all sweet strong meat  
aphrodisiacs to stand  
against the end of innocence

## 14.

my daddy

don' love me no mo'

he takes his heavy hand

and hurted me

pain me to my heart

to let me know

i can be his brown sugar girl

no mo'

what happen here

what went wrong

how come

i am all same same

but my daddy change change

take his love away

leave my inside soul

cleared out blank empty

and me with no place

to go forget

## 15.

hold on

take my hand

let go

on the ride

race you down

hill up hill

dust on dirt road

clinging

let me follow you

anyplace

in love

there is no end

we are glory

everywhere

in nature

a paradise surrounds us

wild tenderness

take hold

loose and let

our spirits soar

## 16.

big mama coming  
bringing love so sweet  
a foreign thing  
bonbon pretty  
pink yellow  
and two shades of blue  
come to seduce us silly  
with pocketbook and pipe  
pressed apron and slicked  
back covered hair  
take us all as we are  
embracing bodies in folds of  
dark warm woman flesh  
this heaven-sent secret  
odor of enchantment

## 17.

don't let

your loving

take too long

you may come

too late

and i'll be gone

don't let

fear

make you stray

don't wait

on heartbreak

to show the way



## 18.

my heart is burning  
in this house  
where i dreamed  
in the dark  
my deepest dreams  
shrouded desire in shadows  
places the dead used to know  
upstairs long  
little bed low  
quilts from hand-me-downs  
curtains hung with faded lace  
the smell of tobacco  
nightshade and morning cool  
this scent love's memory  
everything broken and on fire

## 19.

braided

tobacco leaves

twisted hung

time on the

loosening floor

time stripping

time drying

time turning

sheets of brown

time turning away

and all the time love

the smell of smoke

between us

## 20.

a palimpsest  
of fire  
your words  
are fingers on my flesh  
hands to take  
my body  
rising heat  
touch not  
the flame  
of this too hot  
heavy love  
for it will turn  
our world to ash  
and make the heart  
a grave

## 21.

dark midnight

roaming

seeking a

shoot-and-cut passion

a death

to wound and bind us

the assassin's testimony

i had to kill

to lay bare

the heart

i had to kill

to let go

hold on

be still

eliminate love's trace

## 22.

love ain't got

no messenger

send death instead

love don't need

no witness

let the spirit testify

'cause it no matter

life or no life

strange heart or

familiar beat

whoever calling

they don't know

how to say my name

## 23.

love in sweet morning

love in the afternoon

late-night love

in between sheets

terrors and nightmare

love dreaming

a second coming

rescue resurrection

love keeping me safe

every day all day

## 24.

love don't make no promises  
the heart cannot keep  
he offers kisses from the divine  
nighttime angels  
standing by my bed  
whispering in my sleep  
teaching me dream rhythm flight  
all the ways to move  
beyond life and death  
telling me sweet soul child  
only surrender  
love will not let you forget

## 25.

one cannot love

cowboy boots

red plaid vest

white cotton ruffles

and a holster with no gun

one cannot love these

slow killing things

these blue memories

one cannot love

an image

a dead likeness

it will never give back

the real you

or let you see

the inside heart



## 26.

let me be

a witness to love

stand on the outside

and see tenderness

unbidden

kind words

and a lover's sweet touch

let me be

a witness to love

see each sacrifice surrendered

how patient and joined

such open heart

let me see and then believe

## 27.

no kind love  
would leave me here  
take away treasures  
strip me bare  
of all the soul  
holds dear  
forsake all just  
and fair due  
then flaunt  
its heady passion  
openly offering  
the heart's allure  
only to seduce and  
then betray  
only i am not slain  
though fallen

for love would never

lead me here

## 28.

angels hear  
how she weeps  
in the night  
tenderly attend her woe  
each dark winged  
heavenly creature  
comes with thread in hand  
ready to mend  
this broken heart  
gathering bits and pieces  
every pain shattered fragment  
pierced anew  
love's holy grace  
render each wound  
divine anguish

## 29.

love

has heard

my cry

and shelters me

not even fear

of death

or the grave

still my courage

crush this yielding heart

or make all yearning flee

within me

every closed door opens

paradise enters

grant lost souls

solace and sanctuary

## 30.

oh love

he tells me

i don't know

can't understand

never think

don't know how

only that

there is intense connection

strong binding

abiding warmth

oh love

i come to you who know

the way

oh love

i kneel down

and press my face

against the bosom of memory

where i first yearned

and knew then

how to let my hunger speak

## 31.

love will not let me speak  
will not let me seek words to say  
how heavy my heart  
the way the weight of your body  
closes me down  
shuts the door  
take off your shirt  
hang your tie here  
just as you like to be  
all loose and free again  
let me dress you  
in a dark blue suit  
when you wear it  
i remember desire  
full and complete  
an intensity so hot



i cannot find air

here in this room

where you

do not come again

to lie next to me

after the

heavy work is done

## 32.

even though  
she knows  
a terrorist comes  
she can bear witness  
can tell you by now  
we have been  
together  
our bodies  
spying on your love  
on naked hands  
as they move to touch her  
and make her over  
another woman  
marked by the embrace  
of a man  
known to leave scars

## 33.

to cut

and cut

the heart

another weapon

i can use

its pointed sharp edge

the very tip of desire

pierces you

brings you to the

ecstatic red of the cut

and the blood

that is love's last moment

to tarry and sup together

in remembrance

## 34.

bring me angels  
to keep away hurt  
shield and solace  
offer divine sanctuary  
in love there  
is no need to find  
a hiding place  
and when beloved  
you come again  
i will know your face  
and speak your name

## 35.

saint antonio

oh you who are able

to bring back the lost

i beseech you

he was the only body

i could ever love

like a brother he was to me

he would kiss me

tenderly touch braided hair

and let me put my ear

close to the place

where no heart beats

and there is only the sound

of a closing door

in that place where memory forgets

so there can be no more pain

kneeling with all that remains  
left precious and whole  
sweet flesh in my mouth  
where i call to jesus  
and he comes to me  
to guard us here  
as we search in the dark place  
for you beloved  
who are able  
to bring back the lost

## 36.

love if you were  
a reader of hearts  
you would know  
such longing  
must never speak  
or seek a listening here  
where he takes my hand  
and i am not ready to be  
born a child again  
not ready to forget  
there is no death  
not now  
all sweetness gone  
the hard heart still  
and charming allure  
all eager to speak

to my heart

to talk its way back in

here let me hurt you

with my sight

hold out your hands

the future tells me

everything is always lost

there is nothing

only departure and ending

it is best to stay silent

and keep away



## 37.

love

looked down on

belittled judged

and unable to bear

the heart's weight

can never last

for time will make it

tired and worn

it will grow hard

rage will

overcome desire

and we will forget

what it was like

to know each other

without eyes and testimony

## 38.

sweet sacrifice

a finger in each mouth

to carry away all praise

i have had to offer

body parts

to let go hands that solace

eyes that hold her

captive heart

with just one look

to let go touch

render strange

and unfamiliar

this killing passion

## 39.

empty now  
the red chair  
where i sit  
to write of love  
no naked body easing down  
opening hard  
in this rocking of  
our bodies  
as we join  
and move again  
breast to breast  
i face your hunger  
wet and in need  
we came here always  
to this meeting place  
where now there is only

silence quiet breathing

and the sound of

words moving against words

## 40.

if true love died  
before we ever had  
a chance to see  
what it would be  
if we were really free  
to make promises  
and speak the heart  
then we would not need  
to be sent grace  
in innocent flesh  
or given sacrifice  
i leave a bit of my heart  
on this altar  
flesh to take home  
naked and young  
the way we would have been

i leave a taste of mystery

of love undeclared

let him

eat away grief

## 41.

when angels speak of love

they tell us

all is union and reunion

dying reborn again

there is no separation

no end to paradise

we are always present

the ecstatic moving us

along each current

each wilderness of spirit

a dedicated path

## 42.

ever dark prince

yearns with all the

passion of the cross

sanctified satanic wish

to seduce and sacrifice

love's innocence

making it serve flesh

kneeling at the phallic altar

drinking in the seed of

his revenge



## 43.

how hard

and sweet

this taste of flesh

enchanted

chameleon

seductive trace

tenderly taken love

the snake

guarding

the palace of bliss

to enter

there is only

one open door

## 44.

outside

in the passage

between life and death

love waits

counts in unrecorded rhythm

hours minutes

each moment matters

speak now my heart

say when how

which way

only now

before time is no more

## 45.

i gave my heart  
and in return  
a heart is given  
no lasting body  
no definite trace  
strangers kneel  
in the same temple of love  
i thought my heart  
alone belonged  
connect the unfamiliar  
claim mystery  
in deep history  
heaven's new frontier  
my own and  
not my own

## 46.

love

should not come

in such a way

i cannot know

the heart's yearning

i dreamed a prince

a frog destiny

everything alchemically

turning

into pure gold

love

should not defy desire

make me over

flesh

make me ready

kill the illusion

let truth submit

and every sacred vow

hold fast

## 47.

every dark prince  
courts me with words  
tames the imagination  
puts his tongue  
in my mouth  
speaks tenderly  
to my heart  
to love left lonely  
uncovers secrets  
becomes the interpreter  
of desire  
seduces my soul  
with each narrative of surrender

## 48.

every prince  
in the book  
of love  
journeys  
from a faraway  
dark place  
finds an angel  
of mercy  
to shelter and shield  
him from pain  
he enters my dreams  
tells me  
i can find my true desire  
if i follow  
the heart's labyrinth  
show naked courage

and a will to give all  
yet when we meet  
and i have finally  
come home  
he is already  
leaving  
already mapping his return  
to the land  
where the royal one  
sleeps alone in a place  
without light



## 49.

once

only men

could become

angels

offering the promise

of divine love and

eternal bliss

then one by one

they fell from grace

seduced by death's allure

boldly they surrendered

the promise of paradise

claiming pain as their

one true passion

and their only home

the heart forsaken

found in woman

a place to love again

to dream anew

the angelic to herald

the coming of a new world

a new vision

## 50.

a heady heavy love  
speaks my yearning  
calls me  
to give my all  
and seek the place  
of no return  
to lay bare my heart  
for you  
to whom i surrender  
to you  
for whom i wait



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