

Poetry Series

Ghada Shahbender

- poems -

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Ghada Shahbender(27th March 1962)

Salam. Started writing recently. Appreciate your comments. I find the writing cathartic and am enjoying reading poetry by others. The site is my recluse - an oasis of tranquility on the net.

A Bleak Picture Of Cairo

I search for words to describe and tell
Of that bleak unfamiliar picture of Cairo
That only I am seeing
But the words will not come to my rescue.

Even as I reach out and speak to others
Thinking that maybe through sharing
I'll get a prompt or some cue,
that will help me write
The words continue to evade me.

So I try harder and wait for days
Hoping that maybe those lines will come together
And the image will be clearer
And the sketch will burst into a full color portrayal
Of that gloomy thing that I am thinking
And that the visual will be a narration
That gives a voice and music to the drama
That I am experiencing
And the bits and pieces will fall together
And in unison speak out for the characters in a story
That is in Cairo unfolding.

But all the time as I am waiting
I am outrun by ghosts and demons that come racing
And I can't see through the dust
that they are in the name of religion
throwing in my face
And I can't hear anything
but their fanatic screaming
And I can't make my voice heard over their ghoulish howling.
I am out of words and out of breath
And I have nothing better to do than
Waiting ...

Ghada Shahbender

A Crazy Impulse, An Urgent Need

Uncontrollably weeping I reach for my phone
I ring him up and get an out of service tone
I know he's away and that's all I'll hear
But somehow when I call him I feel he's near
I write him a message that he'll never read
I have this crazy impulse, this urgent need
I know its irrational, I know its insane
But it helps me through the day and eases the pain

Ghada Shahbender

A Different Dream, The Same Theme

Every night I have a dream
A different dream, the same theme
I have a friend who turns away
As I look at him and beg him to stay
I wake up in the midst of this nightmare
As my friend turns away from my pleading stare

Ghada Shahbender

A Spineless Reptile

I am still feverish from the venom of your sting
The poison still runs in my veins
I'm too weak to fight it
It makes me want to lash out at you
It makes me want to hurt you as you did me

I am still delirious and in my rambling I hiss like you
But when I feel a little stronger
When I am a little less confused
The snake coils back to its dark hole that is you
And I know I'm slowly recovering.

I am on my way back to clemency
But you, still bound by malice, are a spineless reptile.

Ghada Shahbender

After Every Storm The Sun Will Shine

This too will pass
It always does
But like a wave rolling back into the sea
It will take away many things you gave to me
The fragile shells of your love,
The scattered sands of my dreams,
Some remains of a relationship
And what is left of an amorous feast
But after all is gone I will continue to stand
Knowing there will always be lots of sand
Dreams of castles will always be mine
And after every storm the sun will shine

Ghada Shahbender

All She Wanted To Do

She wanted to ask him for something
But it was something she could not do
She wanted to cry on his shoulder
And wanted him to cry on hers too...
That was really all she wanted to do

But he had no time to cry
And she had no right to.
And when she had to cry
She cried alone
And then let him see her laughing

Her laughter appeared more beautiful
And her beauty was all he knew.

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Depression

I no longer know me
I don't want to be
I look in the mirror
and a stranger looks back at me
She too is in a bad dream
No one can hear her scream
Her eyes blindfolded and her hands tied
Her voice is muted and her mouth open wide
Strangers all around her
A stranger by her side
She stands in the middle and has nowhere to hide
She's shaking and trembling like a terrified child
She's half crazed, animal like, out of control and wild

Ghada Shahbender

Depression Revisited

We go there
We stay
We click out of it
& Never again we say
If you have ever been there
and you have made it back
You know it will be again
And you wait for the next attack
But this too will pass
So you just let it flow
You will get over it
That much you at least you know

Ghada Shahbender

Fancy Definition Of A Happy Moment? ? !

Fancy Definition of a Happy Moment:

An Optimistic evolution

Of an Evanescent delusion

And an Emotional infusion

That comes inevitably to conclusion.

Should be much simpler than that?

Is much simpler in fact!

Ghada Shahbender

Friday Morning

A blank wall the ugly color of dust
Two drain pipes covered in pigeon droppings and rust
I roll down the shutters to keep Friday morning out
The humid air, the children who swear and the parents that shout.
Newspapers, a cigarette and a huge coffee cup
Heart pouring to Kika, waiting for my children to wake up.
Remembering the years when they came to my bed at dawn
Droopy eyes and toothless mouths open wide in a sweet breathed yawn.
They have grown up and I have aged.
The boys actually drive and the girl is engaged.
I tell the parrot it's been a wonderful trip.
I pick up my coffee and take another sip.

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Haiku For Love And Forgiveness

Deep hurt is deep love
love equals forgiveness too:
I now forgive you

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Haiku In A Broken Heart

In a broken heart
The words I miss you resonate:
They slowly procreate

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Haiku To Dad

Dad where ever you be
Just got my Masters degree
Hope you too miss me

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I Dream Of A Heaven Overlooking The River Nile

I dream of a heaven overlooking the river Nile
The Pyramids at a distance
Fishermen in rickety feluccas
A blazing September sunset
And you sitting next to me
Your face touched with a smile

Questions and confessions
Musings and impressions
Self-expression without permission
Soul searching free of inhibition
First experiences with no apprehension
Bliss and content beyond comprehension

Time frozen as emotions flow
A sense of security with an afterglow
Feelings soaring in crescendo
Tender words and sweet innuendo
Stolen moments to forever cherish
Shared memories that will never perish

Ghada Shahbender

I Want To Dream

I want to close my eyes and dream of happy smiling faces
I want to hear my grandmother sing my favorite lullabuy
I want to feel my babies sweet breath on my face
And run my fingers through their soft hair
I want to be held and hugged
I want to be tenderly loved
I want to dream of days long gone
I want to bid them goodbye

Ghada Shahbender

I Want To Write Happy Poetry

I want to write happy poetry
For people are by nature meant to be happy

I want to tell of my son's warm embrace
and of my daughter in love
and the bliss of
her naiveté.

Of going to a henna party for a bride to be
Of her friends in outrageous outfits
dancing and carefree
Of her grandmother's apparently disapproving
but inwardly as proud as can be.
Of traditional trills and henna etchings
And neighbors watching from their balcony.

Of my cousin in labor
And the arrival of little Ali

Of playful dolphins
And the warm waters of the Red Sea

Of nights of typing and hard work
And finally getting my Masters degree

I want to count blessings and flaunt happiness
And hang it all out for everyone to see

But then a dark memory blocks the sunshine
And its melancholic showers drench me

Ghada Shahbender

I Will Never Be Cold And Hard

I don't want my heart to dry up, shrivel and wither.
I want her to warm up to you and for fear of cruelty shiver.
I want her to hold on to memories, sweet and bitter.
I want her to smile and frown and occasionally jitter.
I want my heart to be my companion and best friend.
And want her to be alive and responsive till the very end.
She is the keeper of my secrets and the holder of all feeling.
She has suffered with me through every lurching and every reeling.
You want me to give up on her after all we've been through together?
No way. She is always going to be there for worse or for better.
She helped through the darkest moments.
She was my only lifeguard.
I will not give up on her.
I will never be cold and hard.

Ghada Shahbender

If You Should Want To Find Me

If You Should Want to Find Me
And I don't know that you ever will
You won't find me amongst the alley cats
For you have long de-clawed me
And taken out my fangs
You won't find me in your shadow
For you have trodden all over me
Unmoved by my heartfelt pangs
You will find me in a prison cell
That you of all people
Should know too well
Or under a palm tree
In a distant oasis
Of solitude and reverie
Or on a deserted beach
Leaning on one hand
And building castles in the sand
There dearest is
Where you will find me
And I'll be waiting patiently
For I am unable to give up on us
And will cherish you indefinitely
indefenitely...

Ghada Shahbender

Illusions

When the walls start falling in on you
You see the pictures closely and discover they are all fake
Then you tread slowly down a corridor of mirrors and glass
Some you can see through clearly
Some are disfigured and distorted
But most are just illusions.
They are just illusions
Especially that image of your self.

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Loneliest Moment

My parrot just died
Kika... is finally free
Freedom awaits me

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Lonely Moment

Loneliest moment:
Parrot screeches for attention;
The house is silent.

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Lonely Moment II

No one at all;
A parrot in captivity
Echoing my call

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Meet Loneliness

She is now my best friend.
Always close to me
She's as reliable
as no one else can ever be.
She can outshine any one
and stand out in the largest crowd
Keeping everyone away from me
with an oppressive shroud
She's ever present but known to a very few
Overtaking their lives,
interfering in almost everything they do.
I often despise her
but usually not for long
For her control over my emotions
is much too strong.
Now that I have introduced you,
I hope you two will rarely meet.
For Loneliness is brutal,
she is neither warm nor sweet.
Keep her at a distance.
Don't make her part of your life.
Protect yourself with a loving partner,
a husband or a wife.

Ghada Shahbender

Message To A Friend - Baghdad

Death harvests its crop randomly.
Before encountering its sharp blades
we defy it with the vulnerable
yet beautiful and colourful
blossoms of Life...
At the end...
It can only defeat us once

Ghada Shahbender

Messages To A Friend

1. Nothing to hide but lots to say
live the moment & think only of today
think not of past or future pain
you have nothing to lose and lots to gain

2. How I miss you my friend who read me poetry
You are angry, lonely, vulnerable & sultry
You hide, you hurt and drown in your pain
but your cries and shouting are not in vain

3. Your words will stay with me all through the night
They have reached out and held me tight
They help me overcome the pain and the deepening sorrow
They'll make me stronger to face tomorrow
Thank you buddy, with you I share
burdens that at times are too much to bear

4. I talk to myself and listen to my heart
my soul is broken its tearing me apart
I face my demons & shed my tears
they have been buried for too many years
I'm scared & lonely & really afraid
to look back & see the mess I've made
I have no choice but to look ahead & fight
even when I know there's nothing but pain in sight
I have to grab I have to steal
wonderful moments for which I feel
Too much to dream of, too much to ask
some moments of happiness
to help face my task.

5. Why torture yourself? Why torment your soul?
No one is perfect. Who in this world is whole?
Unlike others you are searching & that my friend is your doom
Cause in your search you encounter much conflict, pain & gloom
You carry the burden that should be shared by all
You carry it alone and let it weigh down your soul
Give your soul its wings & let it fly
Don't chain it down & watch the years go by

Accept a share of happiness, find some inner peace
Let the torment end. Let the pain ease.

Ghada Shahbender

My Best Friend Is Now My Prison

My soul mate, my best friend, my shadow I chase
to recapture that perfect fleeting moment I thought I'd owned
but it escapes me. it evades me. it disparages me to my face
and reminds me of all the nights i despaired, and in my sleep i moaned
My friend, my one time lover is now my prison from which there is no escape
i'm shackled with sweet bitter memories that i cannot evade
They are all in my mind's eye but they have no shape
They are blurred and murky and through them i aimlessly wade

Ghada Shahbender

Of Old Scars And Deep Pain

I walk on thinking I'll find that thing I'm searching for
Hoping that I'll find it there
As soon as I step out of the dark crowded tunnel I'm walking through
In that bright spot I'm heading to
With that one person I'm looking for.
But dark people get in the way
And demons come to visit and forever stay
Reminding me of the wounds they've caused me,
The old scars that will not heal
And the deep pain I can still feel.

.

I walk on thinking that no one will see me shiver
Hoping that the murky shadows will let me through
If only I hold my head up high long enough and mask my trembling smile,
Keep my knees from crumbling under me
And walk that extra mile.
But my voice wants to shake
And my laughter comes out fake
Reminding me, yet again, of my weakness and vulnerability,
Of old scars that will never heal
And the deep pain that I will forever feel.

Ghada Shahbender

Of Pygmalion And Shaw's Fair Dame

In my search for beauty
I painted this picture of the perfect Other.
I painstakingly sketched.
I added detail, form, light and color.
Over the years I chiseled my Pygmalion.
I wrote the gentleman of Shaw's Fair Dame.
I gave him ideology and compassion.
I gave him qualifications that would gain him fame.
I placed him on a pedestal of altitude
That no human could possibly attain.
His moral standards I set at a level
That only legendary Knights could maintain.
In my memory I stored my colossus
And let the dust of busy everyday life accumulate.
At the dawn of a sleepless night, I'd clear the dust
And make sure He was immaculate.
Then out of a fairytale dream
My Pygmalion came to life.
I clung on to him
Hoping he'd see me through struggle and strife.
In my mind's eye he was perfect.
He was the Other, a human free of every fault.
But in my blind quest for beauty
He became a spider and in his web I was caught.
In my struggle for freedom
The lessons of literature I did recall
But from his pedestal
I could not let him fall.
He lashed out, hurt and injured
Scars of his cruelty were everywhere.
But arrogantly He stood above judgment
Only because I had put him there.

Ghada Shahbender

On Arabs, Stench And Filth.

Arabs gave the world Algebra
And the science of Alchemy
When Europe was in its dark ages
And Aristotle was blasphemy.
Arabs gave the world soap to wash out filth
And do away with stench
I write this down and think
I sound like a condescending wench
They gave the world sugar
To sweeten the palate and acid tongues too.
Here I go again.
I sound like a narrow-minded shrew.
I should not bother to list the contributions
Of Arab Civilization.
In spite of my fury
My anger and indignation!
I am not here to give the narrow minded
Lessons in history.
That is neither an accomplishment
Nor poetic victory!

*This poem was written in response to a poem that described Arabs as filth and stench.

Ghada Shahbender

Out Of My Cocoon

I broke out of my cocoon
& enjoyed the freedom of my new grown wings.
I soared and flew to every light I could see.
I discovered that few lights gave me warmth,
Some lights dazzled me and soon dimmed out,
But most lights burnt me and scorched my wings.

I longed for the lonely dark safety of my abandoned cocoon...
But then I asked myself
"What of the lights that had warmed me up in my darkest moments? "
They made the flight worthwhile...
Even when my wings were singed and blistered...
Even when I thought I was blinded.

The warm lights helped me heal.
Again I am free to fly.

Ghada Shahbender

Regrets

Every time I feel like telling you something
I just sit down and write.
Thinking you could maybe hear me,
Hoping you just might.
But you not listening to me
Is neither strange nor new.
And for my part there are so many things
I never said to you.
Even at our most intimate moments
My soul was never bare.
A flimsy veil protected it
And I chose to leave it there.
Your soul came out in blinding flashes
That quickly disappeared.
There was much we had to hide,
So much that we both feared.
Now the things I left unsaid
Are what I most regret.
And every sweet memory we shared
I need to forget

Ghada Shahbender

Responsible Freedom

Responsible Freedom? ?

In love 'Responsible freedom'

is not a choice

For Love's favorite child is Responsibility

And at her birth

Freedom is willingly aborted

We mourn the death of one

And for the life of Love's favorite child rejoice.

For Love's enslavement deafens us

With the sound of Responsibility's voice.

Can we then speak of freedom of choice?

Ghada Shahbender

The Beauty Of Love Is That It Is Not Intelligent

The beauty of love is that it is not intelligent.

It is free of restraint.

It is free of fear.

It is free of calculation.

It is magical and unreal.

Only in love can one let go of the need to control

And allow for complete submission

Submission to passion and emotion

Submission to that which is natural and instinctual

Love is the state of ultimate freedom.

A freedom we feel

A freedom we lose if we try to understand.

I am going to drift away with this naive beauty

Happy that I feel it

Hoping that you will one day break through your self imposed imprisonment of intelligence

The beauty of love is that it is not fearful.

The beauty of love is that it is not intelligent.

Ghada Shahbender

The Desert Has Taught Me

I went to the desert to lose myself
But she came back strengthened and wizened
For the desert, like life, has many lessons to teach.
It has taught me that not all sand is the same
You have to hold it close to discover its different grains
And you have to dig into it to uncover its many layers
It has taught me that the winds shift and the clouds move
But the rocks of different forms and heights
Stand out to guide and support the weary traveler
The rocks are my friends.

Ghada Shahbender

The Miracle Of Birth

Amazing how this tiny bundle of pink flesh and black hair can so powerfully brush everything else aside.

And at the count of ten perfect fingers and ten perfect toes, new mummy is dazed with affection and overcome with pride.

Dispersed are her melancholic thoughts and secret longing for departed grandpa to be there.

Euphoria, primitive joy and the ultimate fulfillment of dreams of procreation are everywhere.

This miniature addition to our family looms larger than everyone else.

For he is after all a God sent gift, a representative of Life itself.

At the nursery he joins the pink and blue regiment that arrived earlier today.

And for their victory in life we, the witnesses of the miracle of birth, silently pray.

Collectively they challenge us, and questioningly defy:

'Then which of thy Lord's favours will ye deny? '

Ghada Shahbender

The Prince And The Eleventh Concubine

I was not raised for servitude
I was not born into slavery
An eleventh concubine...
I will never be.

I will not howl or crawl
I will not with other lionesses brawl
Into that dark circle...
I will never fall.

I cannot be torn apart and shredded
I cannot be taken as anything but a whole
At the alter of your manliness...
I will not surrender my soul.

A prince you are and a prince I want you to be
To hold tenderly, to mount passionately, to embrace intelligently
But anything less...
You cannot expect from me

For my prince sits high on a manly throne
Of desire, love and respect
And anything less...
Of him I cannot accept.

Ghada Shahbender

The Void

I search within me for thoughts to express
For words to say
For feelings to display
But there's a void

I reach out to friends I knew
To loved ones I need
To strangers I meet
But there's a void

Somewhere I hear a distant voice
I see a shadowy face
I remember a warm embrace
But in an instant they disappear in that void

I've lost your love
I'm left with an emptiness ...
A nothingness ...A hollowness ...
That void is where your love used to be

I search within me
I reach out to those around me
I look for anything to hold on to ...
But I only want you

Ghada Shahbender

The Warlords Of Poemhunter

I am saddened, in fact dismayed
For the attention that I have paid
To fellow poets who fail to perceive
That they should enlighten and not deceive.
Poetry brings solace and tranquility
It's no battleground for verbal stupidity.
It transcends gender, religion and ethnicity
It's not an excuse for madness and eccentricity.
Keep this site clean of hatred and aggression.
Go elsewhere with your childishness and regression.

Ghada Shahbender

To God@

If only I could e-mail God
There's so much I would say.
If only He'd read my messages
Each and every day
I'd tell Him I reach out to you
And hope that You can hear.
I'd say I've much to ask of You
And pray that You are near.
I need to draw on Your strength
to help me carry my load.
I need Your divine Guidance
to see me down the road.
I beg for Your Compassion,
Mercy and Kindness.
I beg for Your Acceptance
and ask for Forgiveness.
I am so very weak,
But You have made me human.
I'm desperate for affection.
I'm very much a woman.
Do You read me Dear God?
Or are my pleas in vain?
Will You help me out of this?
Or is there more to sustain?
If this be an endless journey
then take me to the next stage.
But if it is but a short trip
Then please God I have come of age.

Ghada Shahbender

True Love

Did you ever
Run your fingers through a burning flame
To make sure that it would burn you
Run straight into a closed door
To find out how much it would bruise you
Look straight at a naked lamp
Knowing it would blind you
I did it all
And now I'm sure
The blisters will heal.
And now I have found out
The bruises will fade
And now I know
I will nurture the light inside of me
For as long as it takes to deliver the child
Not a stillborn, lifeless child
This will be a perfect child,
A healthy child - not deformed or maimed
The child that I have already named
True Love.

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