

EXAMPLES OF POETRY BY ANGELA CUMMINGS

This document contains two examples
of poems by Angela Cummings.
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Tulip & Hound

PLUTO

Pluto, you are out. Just like that.
Heartless.

As if none of us could relate to you—
not quite big enough for our own britches,
not pulling all of our own weight.

You are not a survivor of this reality show.

And now, the pejoratives:

“Dwarf,” “outcast,” the embarrassing “planette.”

You need some savvy P.R., Pluto—

an interview with Diane Sawyer,
a good turn on “Dancing with the Stars.”

Children all over earth pluck
your tiny likeness from their mobiles.

I have to wonder: will plutonium seek a new sponsor?

Who will bat ninth for the galaxy?

Must you be known as only a mousey mouse’s dog?

Unsavory.

Still, you glide on, if awkwardly, if slowly.

It is dark out there. Mercury is nervous.

MEMORY'S VAULT

Crossing...
not crossing.
Your fingers, failing wings
I hold in my hand.
You, who have loved us all.
You, who look up, in defiant prayer.
You, who it seems
do not give up easily.

Though I have begged you to,
wished for it, and
scorned myself for this need.

Your fingers, ever Arpeggiotic,
grip my own, scratch at me,
traverse our two worlds.
This is the only way now.

This is the way
to tell me what you know,
what matters to you.
An exchange in kind.

I don't remember,
But there was a time
when I too had no words.
And all you could do was look
at me, and imagine a dream.

I don't remember,
but I know your love
was fierce, original.
Orchestral.
You were the timpani and the harp;
string, reed, and valve.

I could not know it.
But now I know it.

Crossing.

Not crossing –
crashing, crushing.
A glorious fin erupting
over the wave that both
subdues and propels it.

I remember.
I remember this:
The two of us in a white room
with our old dog on her last day.
I could not bear it.

It was you who wore our bravery
and our dignity.
You told the truth to strangers,
to anyone who asked.
A simple heartbreaking story.
A common story
that devastated me.
Child that I was.

Child that I am.

Now, you are playing for me.
Your fingers in my hand.
A last lullaby. Elegy
of grief's wonder;
requiem of joy.

I remember:
falling asleep to the accompanist's chords
your agile hands, never faltering.
Tireless.
But I tire, I break, I fault
(an earthquake fissure)
as the wave
somersaults over us.

All our dogs,
all our cats, and
Dear Mother,
I know it is like the trees
and the tides; the petal
and the staff.

I know it now.
I could not know it then.
I remember:
the collective hymn,
unlocked vault of arias.
And, Mother, it's true –

Music is someone else's memory
that we remember too.