What About Love?

I sit alone in my quiet room in the late evening and try to write a love poem to no one in particular because I have never really loved anyone.

The love I feel for you
Makes me feel so blue
Because I know that you
Don't have any love for me.
Why can't you see
What you are doing to me?

Blah! What a bunch of garbage. I guess that I really should consider what love is before I try to write a poem about it.

A knock on my door interrupts my thoughts. I have to get up from my desk because I locked the door to keep undesirables out.

"Hey dude! Is Jack Around?" Derick Border said.

Great, I think - an undesirable. I say, "No, I have no idea where he's at. What's up?"

"Well, I just laid Debby, and I really want to get basted. Yes, the great god of all V was with my this fine evening. Since Jack's out do you want to get basted with me?"

"No."

"Well, it looks like I'll have to partake of the great bowl myself. Can I light up in here?"

"Ya, I guess. Go over by the window and turn the fan on."

"Hey, everything's cool," Derick says as he turns the fan on and sits his greasy self on Jack's clean, well made bed. He looks like he hasn't showered in a week—his blonde hair is an oil packet mat, he has a scruffy beard, and he smells like a wet dog. Good thing he is sitting over by the window. I'll have to whip out the "Fresh Scent Lysol" after he leaves. I sit down on the cheap easy chair and look at Derick.
People like Derick really get under my skin. They just use people like crazy.

Anticipation runs through me,  
I can barely see.  
For a first time -  
But I can't hesitate -  
The clock will chime  
And it will all be over.

The first girl that I asked at my high school was Marsha Reed. There was some kind of dance going on—homecoming. I was very curious about the whole thing because my friends told me that Marsha was scoping me out. I never had a girl show any interest in me before.

I finally got up the nerve to ask her out, and I couldn't believe it: she said yes. I was so excited; I had a date.

Well, we went out, and everything was pretty cool (I mean I didn't embarrass myself—I actually had a good time). But on the following weekend I asked Marsha to go out to a movie with me. She said, "Hey don't get any ideas. You're kind of cute, but all I wanted was to go to the dance. That's all."

DAMN

Derick says, "Hey do you have a light? I can't find mine."
"No. Check in Jack's top drawer. There might be one in there."

Derick scrounges through the drawer for a minute then says, "Hey here's one. This lighter is pretty cool - I might have to pilfer it." After a brief pause Derick says, "Hey, I really could use some tunes. You don't care if I put on some tunes?"
"No, go ahead," I say tiredly.

After he has rummaged through my albums for a minute, Derick says, "Oh dude, you have the new Aerosmith album. I really have to give this a hear."
"Ya, go ahead."
Infatuation taking hold
I have to have it
Before I grow old.
Don't have to worry.
About what comes next
When you're knee deep in sex.

About a year after that dance in high school and I was still pretty bitter at Marsha for using me.

My first concert was when I was 17 years old. I went up to Chicago, by myself, without my parents permission, to see Aerosmith. It was going to be great - I had pretty good seats.

I was setting right next to a cute girl with long sandy blonde hair, tight jeans, and a new Aerosmith concert tee. After the opening act (I cannot remember for the life of me who it was) finished, the cute girl looked over at me and said, "Hi, I'm Sherry. I really get into Aerosmith."

"Hi, I'm Mark. Aerosmith is the only reason why I came up here today."

"I really think Steve Tyler is sooooo cute."

"Well, I don't know about that, but his voice really kicks ass.""Hey, it's pretty hot in here. do you want to sneak out to my car before Aerosmith comes on?"

"Ya, let's go."

When we got out to the car we talked for a little while longer about the band. Then all of a sudden she says, "Hey do you want to get high?"

"Sure."

After we smoked for awhile, we hopped in the back seat and had sex. While we were going at it she kept saying, "Oh, Steven. Oh, Steven do me. Oh, Steven you are so good." I really didn't care what she said because I just felt too good.

When we got back in the arena, the band was just opening up with "Back in the Saddle Again." I just stood there smiling and said, "Oh Steven you are soooooo good."
Derick puts on another album. White Snakes “Is It Love” comes out of the speakers. Derick says, “Ya, man, this is a boss tune.”

Fire goddess,
Who turns me on—
You’re close enough
To talk to
But too far away
For me to tell
You how I feel.

Chris had the most beautiful red hair that I ever saw in my life; I never was turned on by hair, but Chris’ hair turned me on. I guess that she only had an ordinary head of hair; it was shoulder length and straight, but there was some thing about that intense red color. Chris’ hair was like a Matador’s red cape enticing a bull to charge. I could not find the words to ask her out. Chris and I were pretty good friends; we teased each other a lot, but we always knew when to quit.

Chris and I were in third year high school art class together. The class always had a stereo going playing the latest rock music (White Snake’s “Slide It In” was big at the time), and people were always talking and generally messing around: like starting clay fights and sniffing the paint in the back room.

One day Chris walked over to me with her face all red and full of tears, and she slapped me hard on the right side of my face. I just stood there dumbfounded and said, “What was that for.”

“Don’t give me that shit. You know damn well what that was for,” Chris shrieked. Then she ran out of the room with the teacher in pursuit. I noticed three guys who were back in the corner; they were cracking up laughing. I walked over to them and asked, “What’s so funny?”

The leader of the group said, “I guess your lover girl didn’t like the present you gave her.”
I was getting mad. I asked, "What present?"
"Oh, just some additions to her purse with a little love letter from you," the leader said giggling.
"What a pack of assholes," I said as I walked away.
Later, I found out that those same guys had got into Chris' purse, dyed one of her tampons red, put in a supposedly used condom, and placed a note on the top that said, "Dear Chris, I've been thinking real "hard" about you. Your lover, Mark." The letter was typed, but the signature looked a lot like mine.
Later, Chris found out the truth and she apologized for slapping me; I told her that it didn't matter. After that Chris and I never really talked to each other. I don't know why; I guess it made me so mad that she had so little trust in me.

Derick turns off the stereo and I ask, "What's up?"
"Man, I was thinking that I need some V for tonight."
"What about Debby?"
"Man, she is alright, but I can't be tied down to one V. Besides, she's pretty stupid, but V doesn't need to be too smart—just put out. Time for the mighty black book." Derick pulls a small book out of his soiled jean jacket (why anyone would put their hand in that grungy coat is beyond me). The book is no longer black but more off gray. Derick opens it up but the pages stick together.
"Yes, the mighty black V book has seen some hard times, but still lives on. Here we go. Jill—no way man. I was with her once. We were going pretty good. I got to feel her up but that was it. She told me that she liked sex, but not on the first date. Man, what kind of attitude is that. I mean, that is like a friend would treat me. I don't need a friend."
I thought Jean was great—she had the best body in the whole school, and she looked so hot in that tight, red cheerleading uniform. I thought there was nothing to lose so I asked her to the homecoming dance. She told me, “I think that you’re a really nice guy, but I could never go out with you. We could never be anything but friends.”

I thought: man, what kind of garbage is that. She doesn’t even really know me.

Jean went to the dance with the big football captain, Jim. Eight and a half months later Jim Jr. was born. I guess that Jim was a better friend then me. In didn’t laugh long and loud but I chuckled a little.

Now, Jean is divorced from Jim and is raising little Jim by herself. She works as a secretary for a local company, while her mother watches little Jim.

Derick continues to look through his black paper love connection. “Ah, yes, Hether. I shall call Hether.” Derick dials the phone. “Hello Hether? What’s up?... Hey, do you want to come down and party a little later?... No?... Why not?... Why can’t you say?... No, just tell me... What?... That’s crazy... I thought I meant something to you?” Derick bangs the receiver down. “What an ungrateful bitch.”

“What’s up?”

“Her ex-old man is here and she has to straighten things out with him. She should just tell him to go to hell and forget about it. Ha! I should go out there, straighten him out, and take the V.” Derick says, “Hey man, I heard that you and Sue broke up.”

“Ya. But that was a while back.”

“Man, I just heard a few days ago. Hey, man a couple hits and you forget all about that bitch.”

“No, that’s O.K. I’ll get by.”

“Better with a little help from your friends.”

“You just don’t quit—do you?”

Derick smiled a nasty, yellow smile—the kind of smile that would make the Colgate “Wisdom Tooth” guy fall over and die—“Ha! Never say die!”
We started out as good friends
I waited—anticipated
For something—anything—
Something special—magical
To happen and change my mind.
But nothing happened.
What do I do when my love
Isn't as deep as yours?

Some time ago Sue and I were having a little afternoon sex.
In the heat of the moment she whispers in my ear, "Do you love me?"
I just froze up. I just laid there and didn't say anything.
finally, Sue asked, "What's the matter?"
"Nothing. I was just thinking."
Sue sat up. She had a weird look on her face and said,
"What's the problem? It's a simple question. You shouldn't
have to think about it."
"No, it's not simple."
"Well, do you love me or not?"
"I don't know."
"Doesn't what we are doing here show that we love each
other?"
"No, that's not love. It's only physical desire or lust or
something. I don't know," I said very softly.
Sue's face was contorting and turning a vivid shade of red.
"You bastard! I don't mean anything to you! You were just using
me!"
"No, it's not like that... I don't know... It's... I mean... I like
you but... but..." She broke off, "But nothing! I don't want to hear
anything from you—you asshole! I can't see how you can lay
there and be so calm. I'm leaving."
She got dressed and slammed the door hard on her way
out. I hadn't moved. "But I'm not being calm." I really wasn't
being calm. Her question took me by surprise—I guess that I
never really considered it before.
Sue hasn't spoken to me since then, but of course I have
made no attempt to contact her either. The whole thing just
didn't seem worth the effort. I guess that I was just too disillusioned.

I look at Derick sitting back on Jack's bed listening to the music again. I know it is a mistake but I ask, "Hey, Derick, can I ask you something?"

"Ya, go ahead man," Derick says without looking up.

I ask, "do you know what love is?"

"Love, man. This is love," Derick says as he holds up his pipe.

"No, I mean love between a man and a woman," I say.

"Man, there is no love between a man and a woman—there is only sex," Derick says.

I ask, "Haven't you ever wondered what love would be like?"

"No, man, I see all these people that say they love each other, and then they wind up getting married. And marriage is a bunch of shit. I mean, look at my parents they're married, and they hate each other. The only thing that they have in common is me, and man, that's no joke."

Where is the love
That I can't see.
I don't understand
How it can be true
When you don't show
How you feel.

I wonder how my mom and dad stayed together for 24 years. It would have to be love that kept them together for so long. Wouldn't it?

I remember my mom telling me once, "I loved the old days when your father and I were first married. He used to do special things like bring me flowers and candy every week." Mom paused, then said, "That was before you were born."

Mom and Dad never have really argued, in fact, they really never say much of anything to each other. They never seem to show each other much emotion. But with all their lack of emotion they have managed to have six kids. I guess that they're just so used to each other. I think that they've followed
the same routine their entire married lives. Dad works at the tire plant for eight hours, then he comes home and works in the garage. Mom works all day in around the house. The only times that they spend together are in bed and going to church on Sundays.

At least Mom and Dad sleep together, Gram and Gramps sleep in separate beds. I remember when I did some painting for them, and I saw that their beds were on opposite sides of the room. It just doesn't figure. A person would get the impression that they hate each other, yet they had a bunch of kids. Where did they have sex—on the floor?

There is another knock on the door. Oh, great. I exclaim loudly, "Come in!"

Hether, a short blonde with short, greasy hair and torn, faded jeans comes in and walks over to Derick. Oh, another undesirable. Hether says, "Derick, I'm sorry. I got sick of Bob so I just left him. I really am sorry."

"That's O.K. babe, come here."

They start kissing on Jack's bed, and I hear Derick say, "Man, why couldn't I have fallen in love with a nerd chick."

Hether says something that I cannot make out, and Derick says, "Of course I love you, babe. Hether's back is toward me, and Derick looks up, smiles, and gives me the old peace sign but not to mean peace—V.

I walk over to the desk and wad up the paper with my start of a love poem and pitch it into the garbage. Derick asks while Hether is sucking on his neck, "What's that man?"

"Oh, nothing but some junk," I say as I slide down on the cheap easy chair and drift off to sleep.

Sometime later: I am working on that love poem again, and there is that familiar knock on the door again.
Why does this always happen to me? "Come in."

Derick walks in carrying a brown paper sack that says 10th Street liquors. "Dude, I heard the good news."

"What's that?"

"You've got yourself some fresh V."

"No, it's not like that."

"What's this V's name?"

"HER name is Sherry!"

"Do I know it?"

"No, I don't think you know HER."

"Well, I have to make a run to the liquor store. Tell Jack I stopped by. Do you want any beverage?"

"No."

I am reborn again
In the fiery blood
Of some one else.
The blood was stolen
From a passing smile—
Just enough to fill
My heart (and soul).
Now I dream dreams
I never dreamed before.
My life has meaning—
At least for this moment—
And isn't the moment
Enough?

I met Sherry in one of my classes. Oh, I knew who she was for a long time because she is a few years younger than me. From the first time I saw her in the cafeteria I thought that she was very cute. I found out what her name was from some friends, but I never took it any farther. I just kind of admired her from afar. Then destiny took over—she was in one of my classes. I sat behind her and to the left in class, and all I could do was stare at her during class. Then one day we just started to talk—it was like magic. I could talk to her very easily about things that interested both of us.

During the semester, I began to like Sherry more and
more—I actually never felt so strongly about any girl before. The whole thing was very strange because I never felt so strange before. I felt very happy and strangely optimistic.

I was very afraid to actually ask Sherry out on a date. But I thought about the whole thing over break, and I couldn’t stop thinking about Sherry. I had to ask her out no matter what. I had a lot of respect for her, and I felt that she would never purposely crush my feelings.

When we all got back to school on the first day after break I was determined to ask her out right after class. Unfortunately, I turned very yellow and I couldn’t do it. But the gods of love were smiling down upon me. As I was cowering away down the hall, I heard, “Hey, Mark, do you have some gum?”

I searched like crazy through my book bag and coat, but I couldn’t find any gum. “Sorry, but I have some minties. Do you want one?”

“Ya, thanks.”

“Hey, Sherry, would you want to go with me to scope a movie or something?”

“Ya, that sounds good to me. When do want to go?”

“Well, how about this weekend?”

“Ya, I can make it. Give me a call later.”

Ever since then I have been in a constant daze. I just can’t believe how strongly I feel about Sherry.

“What are you up to?” I ask Derick.

“Oh, I’m just hang’n out for Jack. Do you know where he’s at?”

“I think he’s getting a check cashed for this weekend.”

“Ah, yes, money. Such a valuable commodity—like V. You always need it but there is never enough to go around.”

Derick goes over to my fridge and looks in, “Hey man, what’s with this bottle of wine.”

“Oh, that’s for a special occasion.”

“Ah, saving it for the V, are we?”

I growled under my breath.

“What’s up?” asks Derick.

“Nothing, I was just clearing my throat.”
"Hey, man, what're doing tonight."
"Well, Sherry is coming over and..."
"Hey, great man. Me and Jack are plannin' a blow-out party. V always loves a party."

Derick goes over to the stereo and looks around. "Hey, man, what is this shit. 'Robbie Robertson, Jimmie Barnes, Marillion and 10,000 Maniacs. what is this soft shit. Man, if we're going to have a party in here, we're gonna need something that really rocks."

I half smiled at Derick, that's what you think.