

Four Poems after Xue Tao

1.

We will never share these flowers
that bloom this afternoon—
these lilacs that smell
like love would smell
if it could.

We will never share
the gut-deep sadness
we would feel when
the flowers fall
to the ground to fold
into themselves.

If you ever wondered
when I missed you most
simply think this—
I missed you when
the flowers bloomed up
to the sky and I missed you
when they shivered
and fell dying to the ground.

2.

Absently, I twist
grass stems and flowers
into the shape of
your heart
and mine—
entwining the one
to the other—
and send it to you,
the only one
who understand my poems.

It is almost noon and with it,
a sorrow like thawing earth
breaks the day apart.
The sparrows who fled
here in the fall
now sing songs so sad
I almost want to die.

3.

The wind—
like these flowers—
like this whole season—
is growing old and dying.

Does anyone know if—
or even when—
we'll see each other again?
If I can't tie your heart
to mine, why keep on tying
flowers into
heart-shaped knots?

4.

Do the lilacs—
growing fat on the branch—
know how overwhelming it is
when two people
who love each other
are not together?

When I look at myself
in the water, my tears
are the shapes of spoons.
Does the wind—
blowing this day
with such recklessness—
even know
what tears are?

--- Jamie Parsley is the author of seven books of poems,
including "Just Once," which will be published in
September by Loonfeather Press. He was named Associate
Poet Laureate of North Dakota by current Poet Laureate
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