

Tenth Love Poem and Tenth Song of Despair

by Beate Sigriddaughter

Tenth Love Poem: Freedom

Many years ago I knew I could be
happy in a cottage in the woods,
undisturbed. I wanted to just be
in love with God, the world, and,
if I found you, with you. And here
I am, in just such a place. Thank you.

Deer stroll by, lizards do pushups
on the wall, quail glide along
like Country Western dancers,
never changing level, and I can
safely dream of a time when men
and women and children honor
each other without wounds
and complications.

Thank you for my freedom. When
I found out that the word "free"
comes from an ancient root
"beloved, not in bondage,"
my heart did somersaults.

In the west the sun is sinking. Thank you
for the laughter in your eyes. Thank you
for the kindness in your eyes at dawn.

Thank you for freedom where I feel

devotion with the light of innocence
of one who has been honored.

Tenth Song of Despair: Normal

This then is the danger, when
the crushing heel of disdain
for women is so normal and
we live so awkwardly inured to it,
that we no longer even notice.

Indignant, I show a young woman
an ad for a cute nostalgic poster,
"Women Haters Club," printed
in a catalog designed to sell
primarily to women, and she
looks at me with large bewildered
eyes: What is your point?

I watch young women, proud,
intelligent, give in to condescending
flirtations. It works. It earns them
larger tips. I watch myself
simper and defer. It works. Yes.

Don't get me started on pornography.
Where do we live that it is pleasant
here, and normal, for a man to look
at women who look vulnerable,
for sure, and preferably dim-witted
as well? It is a bad, bad dream

in which I stumble naked on
the high heels of obedience, my finger
at my mouth, tongue lolling, while
the steady acid of contempt
keeps dripping and corroding me
like rust.

