

**From "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman**

1

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,  
this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and  
their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never  
forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are  
crowded with perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the  
distillation, it is odorless,  
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised  
and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread,  
crotch and vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the  
passing of blood and air through my lungs,  
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and  
dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,  
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the

eddies of the wind,  
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,  
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs  
wag,  
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the  
fields and hill-sides,  
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising  
from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd  
the earth much?  
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?  
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the  
origin of all poems,  
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are  
millions of suns left,)  
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor  
look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the  
spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things  
from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the  
beginning and the end,  
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.  
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always  
substance and increase, always sex,  
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed  
of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well  
entretied, braced in the beams,  
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,  
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is  
not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,  
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while  
they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man  
hearty and clean,  
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be  
less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied — I see, dance, laugh, sing;  
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side  
through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day  
with stealthy tread,  
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the  
house with their plenty,  
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream  
at my eyes,  
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,  
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,  
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and  
which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward  
and city I live in, or the nation,  
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors  
old and new,  
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,  
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I  
love,  
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or  
loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,  
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful

news, the fitful events;  
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
But they are not the Me myself.  
Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,  
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle,  
unitary,  
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable  
certain rest,  
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,  
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering  
at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog  
with linguists and contenders,  
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself  
to you,  
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,  
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture,  
not even the best,  
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer  
morning,  
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd  
over upon me,  
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your  
tongue to my bare-stript heart,  
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held  
my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge  
that pass all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my  
own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the  
women my sisters and lovers,

And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,

And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder,  
mullein and poke-weed.

6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full  
hands,  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any  
more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful  
green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we  
may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the  
vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow  
zones,  
Growing among black folks as among white,  
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the  
same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken  
soon out of their mothers' laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old  
mothers,  
Darker than the colourless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths  
for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men  
and women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring  
taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the women and  
children?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at  
the end to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and  
luckier.