

Sonnets for Free  
by Nicholas Gordon

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A teenage girl's first crush is . . . well, crushing.  
Her body isn't hers, nor is her mind.  
She finds herself shivering, shaking, blushing,  
Weak, tormented, sick, and going blind.  
And why? Because some guy might look her way,  
Then cast his eyes as quickly to the ground;  
Some special one, for reasons she can't say,  
Whose voice makes her feel faint when he's around.  
But now my crush on you has been returned,  
And so the two of us stand on some brink:  
It can't be love so young, and yet we've learned  
Love does its will, no matter what we think.  
Slowly, slowly now--we mustn't rush:  
Let's enjoy this first sweet teenage crush.

Aunts and uncles are like sunlit days:  
Under their bright smiles children bloom.  
No parents can remove, in just the ways  
That aunts and uncles do, mid-morning gloom.  
So when children need some extra love,  
Aunts and uncles are like natural springs:  
No tap need turn, nor word need passions move.  
Deep down within the sparkling pleasure sings.  
Until all parents are like Eden's garden:  
Never less than innocent perfection,  
Children well might learn, before they harden,  
Lessons in disinterested affection.  
Even as a smile lights a face,  
So may aunts and uncles childhood grace.

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I know I haven't been an easy child,  
But love for you lies underneath my whims;  
There is no way I could be tame or mild:  
I need sometimes to shout and wave my limbs.  
You're the wall I need to test my height,  
The countervailing force to test my strength,  
The chain I hammer at with all my might,  
Even though you have increased its length.  
It's tough, I know, to be both Mom and Dad,  
To raise me all alone, just hit or miss;  
To have to play at once good cop and bad,  
And give me grief before my goodnight kiss.  
But love against the odds is stronger still:  
I need your fierce, proud love, and always will.

I love you, but I'm not in love with you.  
I want your friendship minus your desire.  
I would not lead you falsely or betray you.  
I feel the tenderness, but not the fire.  
I have no reason for my lack of yearning,  
No explanation for what I don't feel,  
No other love to whom I might be turning,  
No anguish to suggest this isn't real.  
Passion is a horse that knows no master,  
And I cannot with fences make it stay.  
It must run free towards daylight or disaster,  
Awake to glory in no other way.  
So I must say what you don't want to hear,  
But it's a truth that both of us must bear.