

A close-up photograph of a marble sculpture depicting a couple in a romantic embrace. The woman's head is tilted back, and her eyes are closed. Her hair is styled in intricate, swirling curls. Her hands are raised, with fingers gently touching her hair. The man's hands are visible, one resting on her shoulder and the other on her waist. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the texture of the marble and the contours of the figures. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

The
Kiss

and other poems

ROY HILDESTAD

The Kiss
and other poems



Roy Hildestad

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“...ces jolis riens qui sont tout.”

—Roxane
in *Cyrano de Bergerac*
by Edmond Rostand

(“...those pretty nothings that are everything.”)

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The Kiss
~ ~ ~

Yesterday, in a rummage sale,
I saw a rare and antique mirror.
The frame was bronze, blue green with age,
the glass, like a lake, deep blue but clear.

I took it home and found the edges
dense with figures brash and bold:
Of gods and heroes, like Achilles' shield
that Vulcan made of old.

I puzzled looking at the glass
that seemed the surface of a pond
Between whose undulations I
could glimpse a Deep beyond.

But, there was no telling if the Top
would be in this or that direction,
No stand distinguished Front from Back;
its purpose quite defied detection.
It was, *most clearly*, "Wasted Funds"
upon some close inspection.

Yet 'round the face, in ancient Greek
so faint 'twas almost missed,
Was a myth first told when Love was young
and no mortal had yet been kissed.

The myth began like this:

*The Kiss was by young Splendor dreamed
and by Abundance drawn.
Mirth showed it how to dance,
Pan gifted it with song.
The Nymphs infused it with the taste
of honeysuckle in the Spring,
Poseidon sent a potion of
the power to set Earth trembling.*

*From Bacchus, they got 'naughty,'
and his trick of 'glancing furtively,'
Zeus drenched it in a downpour of
his irresistibility.
Diana made it shy like fawns
exploring coyly 'mongst the Trees.
Abundance said, "That's quite enough."
Sly Splendor, with a smile, agreed,
'But fixed that drink The Wanton Wink,
Mirth slipped the Kiss two sips, and then
Pandora set it free.*

*Erato wrote a lyric from which
burst a Kiss each time
A lover whispered to his dearest
the intoxicating rhyme.*

*Mirth metamorphed that magic lyric
into a Kiss Mold
That lent the spirit of the Kiss
to silver, brass, or gold,
And even cards, notes, little gifts,
or just the air we have been told!
(Especially air that's shared by two
who would their hearts' furred wings unfold.)*

*When Rumor caught wind of the Kiss
she gasped "Might be Seduction's pawn!",
Hysteria frantic'd their fears to
Romance, eliciting a yawn.
"Lacks all the necessary substance," 'e fibbed,
"no wit, bank, brains, or brawn."*

*Fair Luna shared her power o'er hearts
at evening, dawn, noon, and midnight.
Apollo, always subtle,
ignited its inner light
And told the Oracle about the Kiss
who closed her eyes and said "Let's see,
'twill know True Love at the first touch,
but serve Tryst faithfully."*

*The Kiss was shown in secret to Hedone
whose friends th'unveiling thronged,
Then critiqued by amorous Aphrodite
who felt the basic plan was strong,
'But asked for time 'alone' to 'study it'
and several samples to muse upon
Of Hard, Soft, Playful, Tender, Breathless,
Lingering and Long.*

*Gossip frowned with Grave Suspicion:
"What can one learn of passionate Love
Alone with Kisses in a cloister?"
Then cautioned 'Rumor not to follow
nor, if she did so, reconnoiter.*

*Poor Aphrodite everything'd tried
to woo Adonis' heart.
Cupid, wishing to help, had shot
him with a fiery dart.
A drift of adoring dryads steered
his eyes in her direction,
But his jealous mare perceived the threat,
and stepped right in between them.
The dart, thus, doubled his love for his horse
(who liked to hunt as much as he)
And left unhealed, the wound of Longing
deep in Aphrodite.*

Rumor trailed Kiss-laden Venus
to a lakeshore blind,
Her quarry, that horse-loving Hunter
handsome as the wading hind
That there transfixed his Romance-barren,
Orionic mind.

She distracted him with Playful and then
stunned him with one Hard,
Drowned him in a flood of Breathless
(which on all her tests had starred),
Then, nursed him back with Long and Tender.
He, Love's joys discovering,
Took her in his arms and Kissed her
Softly, lingering.

Suave Pan was on a date so great,
he arrived one day late for the trial.
Rumor unburdened herself to him
of all she'd seen meanwhile.

He hurried to his mentor's pub
and, Rumor's latest letting on,
Angled for one Unforgettable
and a couple Quick, But Strong.

*But Bacchus sighed, "I have been told,
when Venus left on her foray,
'Distraction helped her 'borrow' the mold.
So, we are out, I'm sad to say.
But the view is fine, please, have some wine!
Splendor will dream more up some day
and 'til then, dance the nights away!"*

*Pan, three drinks after Caution left,
told Regret, "Smooth-talking de Milo
Has klept the Kiss from all of us!
She's nicked the stuff that curls your toes:*

*"Her Adonis loved but horse and chase,
on arm, his falcon, in hand, his bow.
Some sample smooch his soul's replaced,
her charms are now his bungalow!
His sack once brimmed with fowl and pheasants,
he slept in saddle, drank but rain.
Now,
he beds 'til noon and brings her presents
of Kisses!
the only game his packs contain!*

*"Kiss-changed Adonis suits her liking
so much she's now safe from lack
And, as such love wants no declining,
may ne'er bring the Kiss Mold back!"*

Regret, who sensed no silver lining,
foresaw his ruminating ranks explode.
In prep, to test how much 'Distress
his devotees would undergo,
He recalled a future Kiss-less 'Day...
and oh, that thought brought him so low,
He hermes'd his friends, the Fates, a note:
"There's something you should know..."

Taking a skein of tears and rain,
the Fates flew to the Loom of Never
And began to spin and weave a world
without a single Kiss forever.

Regret told Pan what he'd achieved,
but Pan just chuckled, "What next? the
weather?...
If you had ever seen their work,
you'd know the Graces are so clever
Not even the Fates
(your omnipotent, archenemies of Bliss!)
could ever corral the Kiss.

"Sweet Venus is another matter.
With Vulcan wrapped around her wrist,
She'll lock it in a box so strong
'twould take an inside job to free
the Catalyst of Trysts."

(No one knows just how that job
appeared on Chance's Might-'Do list.)

*Mischievous Mirth some foolishness
had snuck beside its heart
Quite sure the Kiss would never, ever
be but hope or art.*

*Though, History had larger plans
for the Kiss right from the start.*

*He intimated to Disaster:
“Delphi slipped me a prophecy
Of (deniably) the Fall of Troy,
that she needs to come true...eventually...
Suggesting we might intercede
or even do the deed.
I wondered if you would agree,
one Kiss is all we'd need.”*

*Gossip overheard them and
sent Fame to check the lead.*

*Fame glimpsed a French Kiss through the curtains
as the Graces finished up that day
And spread the word: “Love soon may be
a dessert served on a tray.”*

*At that news, Cupid jumped and
beelined to the studio
To see if Rumor might be right:
his darts could be demoted by
some chocolate gateau!*