

For my  
M.M.B.

From your  
P.P.B.

# 1.

I love the sound of your voice the moment I wake, my own hoarse with sleep and tired dreams. Your soft words invigorate me, like a kiss of the fresh day ahead. It's boundless opportunity, it's white, gleaming hope and the promise of all things good.

Sometimes you tease me and speak in funny accents. A voice from London, another Down Under – once I suspected you were Japanese – but never do you sound foreign. Your voice feels like home to me.

And when you laugh, O how my spirits soar! Don't matter if the day has taken its toll on me, don't matter if the harsh realities of my wasted life threaten to overwhelm, to suck me under – I know you'll pull me out; you always do. You're my lifesaver, the air that I breathe sweeter now than it's ever been.

You make me feel more loved than I've ever been.

All you need to do is speak to me, to surprise me, to let me know I'm the one you're thinking of. All it takes is a phone call and I can forget all the bitter nights and sleepless years that came before.

Call me, call me.

## 2.

I can't afford to buy you flowers  
Them roses, they don't come too cheap  
I can't afford to buy you diamonds  
Them stones, they might cut too deep

I can't afford to buy you a drink  
You'd go red; I'd lose my footing  
I can't afford a nice hotel room  
We're not married, it'd feel like cheating

I can't afford us a vacation  
We'd get burned, the sun too heady  
I can't afford no more excuses  
Life's short: O come here, baby!

### 3.

You turn me into a Madonna song.

*Like a virgin. Touched for the very first time. O it's pop, O it's coy alright, but who knew, under your careless fingers, I'd turn into your toy? You make me shudder, wonder if I dare ever, to touch you would be like to taint an angel, but temptation baits and so I slip, gladly into your folds, into the dreams you make for me. I want you, I need you, make me yearn – it's all I can do not to perish under your heat, you must swallow me whole, leave none of me behind. Please.*

But it ain't all dirty and sweaty. When we do nothing at all, when we hold nothing but each other, a mess of arms and legs wound into one, you show me how sacred we are, and as you whisper into my ear, I can only melt into you...

*Just like a prayer, your voice can take me there.*

## 4.

Don't look into mirrors; they only show what you believe are your flaws.

If you have to look into something, let it be deep into my eyes; true love tears down all self-inflicted disguises.

## 5.

God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
Wisdom to know the difference, and  
Love to see me through.

## 6.

We're like apples and oranges. Or potatoes and tomatoes, really. You say "po-TAH-toe", I say "po-TAY-toe." I say "toe-MAY-toe" and you'd go "to-MAH-toe." You're a "zed" while I'm a "zee." One "kAHnt", the other "kEHnt". Continents couldn't be further apart.

We're like gazelles and giraffes. We feed on such different levels. I'd die for chocolate but you can't live without cheesecake. I'm no Popeye but I must have my spinach; you like your meat. My eggs go half-boiled, yours well done. When we dine at Chinese restaurants, both dishes of sliced chillies and soy sauce come my way. If we are what we eat, surely we aren't each other.

And why would we want to be? The list goes on and on; our differences seem endless, but if we believe the cliché that opposites attract, then my South will always know your North.

## 7.

When we first met, we talked all the time. Just stories and anecdotes and fantasies and gossip and ideas and everything imaginable under the sun. Well, mostly, I talked.

I have a bad habit of taking over conversations like that. I monopolise, I'm a control freak, an attention whore, an exhibitionist. How could you have been content to just sit there and listen to me ramble away like that, I wonder?

Now, thankfully, we still talk. All the time. Not a day goes by that we don't. Only now, I'm happier to let you do most of the talking, to just listen. I hang on your every word.

Don't get me wrong, I'm still a blabbermouth, but you've surely put a spell on me. I'm hypnotised and damn it, I don't wanna miss a thing.

## 8.

Remember that afternoon when we were making fun of Tom Cruise in *Jerry Maguire*, his awful lines of –

“You complete me.”

and worse,

“You had me at ‘Hello.’”

– which is absolutely hypocritical, considering what a big mushpot I’m turning into (hopefully not to your utter dismay, and even if so, there is no refund on this one, definitely no return policy) and the terrible truth that you had me before we even spoke to each other. Yes, corny and cheesy all rolled into one tasty snack, with you, my dear, it was –

Love at First Sight.

## 9.

If we were lost at sea

A mariner's life we would lead

Breakfast on shrimp and fine English tea

Airport novels for us to read

We'd make love endlessly

Or at least till we tire of the deed!

## 10.

I'll buy you a helium balloon

Just to hear you sound like a Tiny Toon!

# 11.

You say action speaks louder than words.

But baby, words are all I have. These are my arrows, my slings of truth; these are my bloody swords and spears, my rusty armour, the only defence I have. "I won't be hurt, I won't ever be," I have told myself a thousand times I won't let me be hurt again.

But these words of mine can't hide the trembling, the stutter, the loss of grace when I'm set before you. I become a hopeless, hapless creature; gone are the clever metaphors, no wisecracks remain. I'll be an airhead, a bimbo, a knave, the Fool; don't really care so long as I'm with you.

Heck, the only dignity I possess is in how much I adore you. So maybe I lack action and my words, they fail. Surely you can still see this in my eyes when I look at you, cos that seems what I do all the time, what I pray to do for all time. Surely I don't have to prove myself before countless tests to mean it when I say "I love you", to have it be nothing less than our truth.

Iloveyouloveyouloveyou.

## 12.

Friends debated if I would ever fall in love again. The last round had me beaten up but good. I trolled the phrase “My Ex-Girlfriend” like a blunt object, like a string of curses, like an apology for being single but almost always unavailable.

I was happily unattached and content in my misery. Three years. Plus. A decent record, for me at least. (I’ve got nothing on those monks though. Celibacy. What were they thinking?)

Then you came along and ruined all that.

Thank you.

## 13.

There once lived a princess in a castle made of diamonds. She was young and beautiful, of course, though whether she was also young and beautiful, naturally, no one knew. (The wonders of plastic surgery and herbal supplements these days, quite amazing.)

And being a young and beautiful princess living in a castle made of diamonds, she had little need for money or fame, for really, if such an abode can't bring you either, what can?

All she lacked was a brave and handsome prince, but these are so hard to come by these days. What was a princess to do? The lifestyle of the rich and famous did not a good husband guarantee. And who ever said she wanted a husband? Even a boyfriend could turn out to be tedious.

No, this princess, young and beautiful as she was, was no silly creature. She had read all the books in the castle's library, more than half of them twice over or even more, when the nights were dark and stormy, and knew, therefore, exactly the sort of boy she wanted.

Except wisdom gleaned from those books also taught her that this was quite unlikely, the probability against it quite astronomical. (She had degrees in both Statistics and Astronomy, so you can take her word for it, quite.)

I don't know how this story ends. I do know that if I ever met this princess I'd tell her to forget about husbands or boyfriends, to leave all those novels and textbooks behind, and just go out there and see what's the world to offer.

Love comes in unexpected packages; it's knowing when to stop and spot it that counts. And to enjoy it then and there, never expecting it to last or to be lost.

## 14.

We keep telling each other we would take it nice and slow, that we won't rush into this. It's far too early to talk about a "relationship." We've both been hurt before. So. No expectations. It's the sensible thing to do.

We never did take our own advice though. Lucky us.

## 15.

You don't exist.

See, my friends have been asking. Where have I been of late? They have no one to turn to for a midnight cuppa, an ear for their latest sob stories, not even a companion for the summer blockbusters. How is it that I, He Who Misses All The Movies When They Come Out, has already seen everything? Everything. ("The moment the darn film is released, he's seen it.")

How do I do it? I give no answer. It's a mystery.

You know, they are calling you Movie Girl now. A phantom who drags me off to watch movies, in the theatres even. Silly friends o' mine. How could you possibly have accomplished this?

After all, you don't exist. Do you?

## 16.

I'm sorry. I say that all the time. Say them enough times and I fear the words lose their meaning no matter how much I may mean them. Why am I so afraid of screwing up?

Maybe cos I used to screw up and used to screw up all the time. Maybe cos I'm really the perfectionist everyone claims I am, and I loathe making mistakes. Maybe I'm just worried I'd piss you off enough that you'd leave me.

I'm sorry. I say that all the time. Maybe not enough times, even.

But all I need is to look into your eyes or to have your hands slip into mine, and I know I'm forgiven.

## 17.

One day I'll cook for you.

I've told you tales of when I used to host dinner parties for fifteen when I lived in Munich. All sorts of half-bastardised Malaysian dishes I had re-created in a kitchen with no pandan leaves or petai or decent sambal.

The two Mikes from Chicago choked on the dried chillies in my Szechuan cubed turkey with bell peppers; the Italian boys knew better to just push the hot stuff to the side of their plates.

Thor the Dane came late (we were all drunk by then) and all he had was leftover white rice topped with some bottled chilli sauce. The next day (when I had sobered a bit) he told me it was the best Asian food he's ever had. Go figure.

One day I'll cook for you, my dear. But don't worry, I'll be sure to leave the chillies out.

## 18.

There are two roads that this path could take us. One divides and while we're both hoping against this, we're prepared for the worst. (Or so we tell each other.)

The other one is nearly a fairy tale. Happily ever after. Everything we could ask for. Seems naïve to expect this to be the one granted to us. But nothing's ever granted without some hard work from our part.

Each blessing comes with tears and sweat and blood. We want this and we'll damn well work for it.

Wherever it leads us, we'll walk down this path together.

## 19.

I love how you have a hundred and one different laughs, and how all of them makes me feel just that much better about myself.

I love how you'd complain about all your supposed bodily imperfections cos I love them all.

I love how you'd turn up when I least expect you to; I love being surprised. Hell, I just love having you turn up.

I love how you help me to dress better.

I love how you won't take no crap from me.

I love how you are full of song; our lives become a musical with a tune for every occasion.

I love how we eat completely different things.

I love how you'd call me before I even know I need to hear your voice.

I love how you'd tease me mercilessly; I love how I'm totally pussy-whipped by you.

I love how you love me and I love loving you.

## 20.

I wonder what our Valentine's would be like. I can be terribly unromantic. Cards are impersonal; flowers overpriced and how quickly they die. You don't like chocolates (other than the cheap stuff which I refuse to touch).

Restaurants would be completely booked. (Try reserve in advance, you say? I'd probably forget.) Clothes? No idea what size you wear. Fragrances? I'm allergic. No, I doubt I'd get you anything; it's so difficult to choose when everything seems wrong. (Of course, I meant for *me*.)

No, I guess come February 14 all you'll get is yours truly, but if it's any consolation, I'd be truly yours.

## 21.

There's no coffee to keep me awake, not a Red Bull in sight. I made myself some instant noodles a couple hours back, some Ovaltine and honey before that. My .mp3 playlist constantly shifting: Bette Midler one minute, The Decemberists the next. All of them trying to keep me up and going.

I'm sure I no longer make much sense; the words run together and repeat. Mush gets rehashed. Add extra cheese. (There, I made you smile, didn't I? Or was it merely a resigned cringe?)

But what really keeps me writing is the photo frame of the two of us; it reminds me that all my twenty-seven hours of foolishness and my procrastination and lack of inspiration, it's all worth it, if only I can touch your heart, if only I can move it a little, with these love notes from me; the closest, since I can't carry a tune to save my soul, I'd ever come to singing you love songs...

## 22.

You smell like nothing I've smelled before yet so familiar I don't how I could have lived without its lure.

## 23.

I will follow you, follow you wherever you may go, no matter how many others I might flirt with, no matter how much eye candy for my mischief, it's only you who lives in my heart; you are my end and my start.

Reading your pages, I need no other tome; wrapping myself around you, I know I'm finally home.

## 24.

When I asked you to teach me how to dance, I never did tell you how I had gotten down and dirty in neon-and-smoke-filled clubs in my younger days, how naked flesh and throbbing bodies would rub against my own, how sweat and spit and spirit all swirled into one constant beat. No, I never did tell you any of that.

I am too busy trying not to step on your toes, tapping back and forth gingerly, feeling like a clumsy oaf to your grace. I love how good you are at this, I love how much you love doing this.

Finally I do trip us up (on purpose, you insist, and I won't dignify that with a denial) and we fall together onto my bed. We laugh, and you slap me on my shoulder, such light punishment, and I take my prize for being the worst student in the world, a kiss, just one, brief and perfect.

## 25.

If I were a bird, I'd fly to your side now  
Let my feathers slide off like a second skin  
Into your bed I'd slip in, curl up next to you  
Wander into your dreams and then we'll dream for two.

## 26.

Every word I've said is true  
Every picture I've drawn of you  
Every kiss I've taken from your lips  
A precious memory I'll forever keep.

**27.**

Happy Birthday.

Hey, I know. It's not your first birthday but it's our first  
candles together. May they last. May we last.

Happy Birthday, baby.