

*Locked door each day (a poem impossible to write)*

*I love you: then the thought — I should like to write a poem which would express exactly what I mean when I think these words.*  
— W. H. Auden, from ‘Dichtung und Wahrheit, an unwritten poem’

1

You are beautiful.

2

We look at each other with increasing bemusement  
over what time deals so swiftly across the table into our hands.

3

You are beautiful — is a way of saying  
your beauty is a sentence gathering itself to itself,  
as a street goes on across the winding ridge of a hill town  
with its curved back stretched against rocky earth.

4

As we turn to each day knowing the ropes,  
the weather patterns and the route, but not clearly the destination,  
we trust we’re lashed down well enough for the storms when they come.

5

You are beautiful and I love you.  
Who can say, clear and particular, what this says?  
‘I’ I don’t recognise in that letter on the page.  
‘You’ is too abstract, and not you.  
How to make you, impossibly, you?

6

We go to ordinary meals, surprising conversations, railway platforms,  
and I rejoice that this is done in step with you.  
Perhaps *I love you* is a way of saying I equals you.  
Or I almost equals you. Or *I to you am coming closer and closer*.

7

You are beautiful. I am worried you will laugh at this,  
or someone will want to see the evidence in a photograph,  
or I’ll be questioned about the nature of your eyes,  
the shape of your lips and length of your neck  
(yes, necks are essential elements of beauty).  
But being earnest won’t get us to it.

8

I might say I love you more than birds love their flight,  
more than windows love light,  
more than hope loves the dawn,  
and still no one would know anything about us  
(except that we are drawn by love sometimes to a kind of poetry).

9

You are beautiful to me  
qualifies your beauty monstrously  
and makes a lie of what I know. You are beautiful.  
We’re not anything but this love we let in.

10

Desires, dreams of breaking every rule and rope,  
the longing for every chance and every infidelity is always in us.  
Your beauty like a dye is in me too and through me now.

11

You are beautiful. *I to you am coming closer and closer*.  
We throw a different truth at the locked door of each day  
as if this time it will knock the big door open at last.