**On Stella’s Birth-day**

Stella this Day is thirty four,

(We shan’t dispute a Year or more)

However Stella, be not troubled,

Although thy Size and Years are doubled,

Since first I saw Thee at Sixteen

The brightest Virgin on the Green,

So little is thy Form declin’d

Made up so largely in thy Mind.

Oh, would it please the Gods to split

Thy Beauty, Size, and Years, and Wit,

No Age could furnish out a Pair

Of Nymphs so gracefull, Wise and fair

With half the Lustre of Your Eyes,

With half your Wit, your Years and Size:

And then before it grew too late,

How should I beg of gentle Fate,

(That either Nymph might have her Swain,)

To split my Worship too in twain.

—Jonathan Swift

**Twenty-four Years**

Twenty-four years remind the tears of my eyes.

(Bury the dead for fear that they walk to the grave in labour.)

In the groin of the natural doorway I crouched like a tailor

Sewing a shroud for a journey

By the light of the meat-eating sun.

Dressed to die, the sensual strut begun,

With my red veins full of money,

In the final direction of the elementary town

I advance for as long as forever is.

—Dylan Thomas [](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/twenty-four-years/)

[](http://twitter.com/?status=%20http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/twenty-four-years/)

[](https://plus.google.com/share?url=http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/twenty-four-years/)

**Morning Song**

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.

The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry

Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.

In a drafty museum, your nakedness

Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I’m no more your mother

Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow

Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath

Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:

A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral

In my Victorian nightgown.

Your mouth opens clean as a cat’s. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try

Your handful of notes;

The clear vowels rise like balloons.

—Sylvia Plath

**The Hug**

It was your birthday, we had drunk and dined

Half of the night with our old friend

Who’d showed us in the end

To a bed I reached in one drunk stride.

Already I lay snug,

And drowsy with the wine dozed on one side.

I dozed, I slept. My sleep broke on a hug,

Suddenly, from behind,

In which the full lengths of our bodies pressed:

Your instep to my heel,

My shoulder-blades against your chest.

It was not sex, but I could feel

The whole strength of your body set,

Or braced, to mine,

And locking me to you

As if we were still twenty-two

When our grand passion had not yet

Become familial.

My quick sleep had deleted all

Of intervening time and place.

I only knew

The stay of your secure firm dry embrace.

—Thom Gunn

**Man and Camel**

On the eve of my fortieth birthday

I sat on the porch having a smoke

when out of the blue a man and a camel

happened by. Neither uttered a sound

at first, but as they drifted up the street

and out of town the two of them began to sing.

Yet what they sang is still a mystery to me—

the words were indistinct and the tune

too ornamental to recall. Into the desert

they went and as they went their voices

rose as one above the sifting sound

of windblown sand. The wonder of their singing,

its elusive blend of man and camel, seemed

an ideal image for all uncommon couples.

Was this the night that I had waited for

so long? I wanted to believe it was,

but just as they were vanishing, the man

and camel ceased to sing, and galloped

back to town. They stood before my porch,

staring up at me with beady eyes, and said:

“You ruined it. You ruined it forever.”

—Mark Strand