

Remembering Ann

Duncan Gillies MacLaurin



“A lovely tribute – and in apt ways an amusing one too. A fine blend of the serious poet and the inveterate busker.” Nigel Stuart, poet

“A really beautiful, heartfelt eulogy of love.” Ian Lukins, poet

Saeby, 2021

Contents

	<i>page</i>
Ann Gone.....	3
A Karen Blixen.....	4
Remembering Ann.....	5
Now Comes Another Year	6
<i>About Ann</i>	7
<i>About the Author</i>	7

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Ann Gone

A star has fallen from the sky,
and now the world is weeping.
But in my heart you'll never die.
You are only sleeping.

You're still so good to me.
You're still so good to me.

*You're the sprite in the spark,
you're the light in the dark.
You're no longer here on the beach anymore.
Ann, the reason we fell
to our season in hell
was our stairway to heaven before.
Though they never took place,
I endeavour to trace
animated scenes where you breeze through the door
and incredibly say:
"Dun, you're ready to stay
on your own on this foreign shore."*

You're still so present in my life.
You've made it so worth living.
You'll always be my darling wife.
You'll always keep on giving.

You're still so good to me.
You're still so good to me.

*You're the sprite in the spark,
you're the light in the dark.
You're no longer here on the beach anymore.
Ann, the reason we fell
to our season in hell
was our stairway to heaven before.
Though they never took place,
I endeavour to trace
animated scenes where you breeze through the door
and incredibly say:
"Dun, you're ready to stay
on your own on this foreign shore."*



A Karen Blixen

This photograph of you, from golden years
on Daisy Close one sunny summer day,
still makes me smile, then splinter into tears.
You asked me to remember you the way
you were before you blossomed. Ever since
I met you in Assisi long ago,
you've been my rose, and I, the Little Prince,
would see a simple garden flower grow
into a Karen Blixen. Here's the bed
where your sweet-scented, pure-white petals shone.
And even when an evil canker spread,
you bloomed again, undaunted. Now you've gone,
I sing for you, just like I've always done,
and catch you smiling as you catch the sun.

Remembering Ann

Ann didn't like to hang around.
She grew up by the sea.
She learned to love the sight and sound
of seagulls wheeling free.
She'd skip and jump and swim and walk
along the sandy beach,
come evening, see the lighthouse talk,
forever within reach.

*Sooner or later, there's no telling when,
sooner or later, I'll see her again.*

She found me busking on trombone
one afternoon in May.
I happened to be all alone
and asked her, "Won't you stay?"
Our joint ambition was to tell
the story of our life.
We made our paths run parallel,
forever man and wife.

*Sooner or later, there's no telling when,
sooner or later, I'll see her again.*

While poetry was our first choice –
and what I later chose –
Ann listened to her inner voice
and turned to writing prose.
She started as a journalist –
sea safety was her niche –
and then became an activist,
forever off the leash.

*Sooner or later, there's no telling when,
sooner or later, I'll see her again.*

The Woman with the Garden Fair
was quite a pantomime.
Ann almost fell out of her chair
with laughter at the time.
We then moved back to where she'd spent
her childhood. Here she'd write
a kids' book showing her dissent,
forever shedding light.

*Sooner or later, there's no telling when,
sooner or later, I'll see her again.*

Our summers numbered thirty-five,
our winters thirty-four.
I see you, Ann, as still alive,
still talking on the shore.
You're still misquoting "I'm Your Man",
your favourite Cohen song.
You'll always be my lighthouse, Ann,
forever bright and strong,
forever and ever bright and strong.

*Sooner or later, there's no telling when,
sooner or later, I'll see you again.*

Note: Ann's fifth book, published in 2011, was a docu-fairy-tale, *Kvinden med den smukke have* (*The Woman with the Beautiful Garden* or, as here, *The Woman with the Garden Fair*). It's autobiographical. A neighbour stalked the couple, and they had to leave their home on Fanö. The woman's husband is called the Poet, and the eight pieces he writes were written by DGM.

Now Comes Another Year

The day I met you, Ann, would be
the day that I began to see
I had to take a chance
and ask you for a dance.

You showed me such compassion that
I'd no choice but to cash in at
the bank of destiny,
forever you and me.

*I wasn't any longer wasting time
looking for a reason or a rhyme.
Things all fell into place.
It's hard to understand you've really gone.
I can't imagine how I'll carry on.
I miss your cheeky face.*

You meant the world to me, you know.
I couldn't bear to see you go.
Now comes another year
of you not being here.

*I wasn't any longer wasting time
waiting for a reason or a rhyme.
The bits fell into place.
It's hard to understand you've really gone.
I can't imagine how I'll carry on.
I miss your cheeky face*

About Ann

Ann Bilde was born in Frederikshavn on 19th December 1961.

She took degrees in Nordic Language and Literature as well as Information and Media Studies at Aarhus University. She met a Scottish poet, Duncan Gillies MacLaurin, in Italy on a half-year sabbatical, and when she went back to Denmark four months later, he was still with her. They were married the following year. She worked as a teacher of journalism for three years and was then editor at the University of Southern Denmark for five years. She then became a freelance journalist to pursue the dream of being a writer that she'd had since she was five years old – in other words, even before she went to school and learned to read and write.

She initially worked primarily with PR and became known as an expert in safety at sea.

She had her authorial debut at Borgens Forlag in 2000 with a series of portraits, *Glimpses from the Very Edge*, and in 2004, she started her own publishing company, Forlaget Freja. She wrote and published six more books – two novels, two documentaries, and two docu-fairy-tales.

Ann was dedicated to exposing political scandals and abuse of power as well as environmental scandals such as Cheminova's pollution at Thyborøn and extraction of shale gas in Denmark. A fellow author said of her that she would never stop trying to make the world a better place.

After spending 23 years on the island of Fanö and the west coast, in 2014 she moved back to the area where she grew up, her Scottish husband still in tow.

In 2019 she became seriously ill with cancer. She suffered a life-threatening blood infection over Christmas, but she recovered, regained her strength, and wrote and published the second of her docu-fairy-tales, *The Smiling Camel Comes to the Pond*, a children's book, but also a satirical exposé of the local swimming baths.

Ann died at home in Saeby on 28th October 2020. She wore her wedding dress in her coffin, and on her subsequent wedding anniversary her ashes were spread off the island of Hirtsholm, which houses the lighthouse she could see from her childhood home. It was also on a ferry back from Hirtsholm that her mother realized she was pregnant with Ann (and her twin-sister, Pia) because she never normally got seasick.

About the Author

Duncan Gillies MacLaurin was born in Glasgow on 22nd June 1962. His father taught him chess and bridge when he was very young, and he was a keen chess player in his youth. He attended boarding schools in Perthshire from the ages of 8 to 18.

On the beach of a Greek island one night, in 1981, he was enchanted by a version of "Suzanne" on guitar. He started reading Classics at Oxford University later that year, but left without a degree, disappointed with Classical Philosophy's dictum, "Poetry does not exist". In 1984, he signed up for reading French, Anthropology and Psychology at London University, but took to playing trombone on the street instead. In 1985, he busked in Gibraltar for three months. Back in London, his home patch was the subway (AE: underpass) beside the Hammersmith Odeon. He began to write poetry.

In 1986, he went busking in Italy and met a Danish writer, Ann Bilde. They went to Belgrade together shortly afterwards, where he purchased a guitar and began to turn his poetry into song. Settling in Denmark, he married Ann in 1987. They were a couple until her death in 2020.

He took degrees in English and Latin at Aarhus University and has taught these subjects at *gymnasiet* (sixth-form-college/high-school level) since 1995.

His poetry has been published widely and has appeared in several anthologies, most recently in *Extreme Sonnets* and *Extreme Formal Poetry*. He has had three collections of poetry published.

Many of Duncan's pieces are songs rather than poems, and he also sets music to his poems. He performs "Suzanne" himself now, and since 2013, the year his father died, he has again taken up chess.



Flowers that DGM's sister, Julia, picked from her garden on the day Ann died.