



# Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning

*Alice Walker*

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Vivid poems of “breakdown and spiritual disarray.” Writing these, Walker says, “led me eventually into a larger understanding of the psyche, and of the world.” What finally marks this volume is the strong sense of change and, ultimately, of forgiveness as a part of growth.

## Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning Details

Date : Published November 1st 1987 by The Women's Press (first published January 1st 1979)

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Author : Alice Walker

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## **From Reader Review Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning for online ebook**

### **Syd says**

I'm not usually a big fan of Alice Walker's poetry, but I liked this more than other collections I've read.

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### **Samrat says**

I don't really have a frame of reference to appreciate Walker's work. I am a poetry noob. But these were accessible and emotional and minimalist and just lovely. I was particularly moved by the first poems, aimed largely at men who have tried to shape or control her. It's amazing how much narrative and emotion she contains in so few words.

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### **Kassandra says**

This is a book of Walker's I hadn't read, so though it's a bit dated (a poem about streaking, a found poem from the NY Review of Books in 1972), I was still eager to read it. The poetry is a mix of personal/confessional love poetry, poems about family, and narrative and persona poems that tell stories and make reference to African heritage. There's a good balance here between the political and the personal, though many of the love poems and shorter personal poems fall flat, and feel like drafts instead of finished pieces. What I like about Walker's poetry is its honesty, simplicity, and straightforwardness, with an unflinching ability to portray both what's beautiful about herself and others, as well as what's ugly. These are very human poems, easily grasped and identified with, that serve to partially delineate the Black experience without feeling preachy or maudlin.

Some of my favorites:

Did This Happen to Your Mother? Did Your Sister Throw Up A Lot?

Janie Crawford

Early Losses: A Requiem

The Abduction of Saints

talking to my grandmother/who died poor

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### **Ashley says**

I never read books of poetry...it sure is fun having someone else's library at my disposal all summer. :)

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## Emily Polson says

This collection of poems explores issues of race, gender, insecurity, bitterness, heritage, loss, forgiveness, and love. The tone is raw, vulnerable, and powerful, both in language and form.

Favorites from the collection:

"Did This Happen to Your Mother? Did Your Sister Throw Up a Lot?"

"Never Offer Your Heart to Someone Who Eats Hearts"

"On Stripping Bark from Myself"

"facing the way"

"January 10, 1973"

"Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning," which concludes:

"And it was then I knew that the healing  
of all our wounds  
is forgiveness  
that permits a promise  
of our return  
at the end."

A full spectrum of emotional exploration, from the anger to the resolve.

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## leynes says

Confession time: I am afraid of reading *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. I've watched the movie adaptation when I was way too young and remained traumatized since then by the brutality of the story. I'm not sure if I'm going to face my fear in 2018 but I, at least, wanted to check out something else by her, which is why I settled with *Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning*.

I didn't even know that Alice Walker was a poet as well as a novelist. This little collection of her words really spoke to me. Therefore, I'll be checking out the other three collections that were published by the *Women's Press*. Her poems are beautifully vivid, spiritual (but not in a preachy way!) and sensual. Walker reflects her relationships and her personal growth (and how it's intertwined with the long tradition of strong, naive, suffering women in her family).

**I love a man who is not worth  
my love.  
Did this happen to your mother?  
Did your grandmother wake up  
for no good reason  
in the middle of the night?**

**I thought love could be controlled.  
It cannot.  
Only behaviour can be controlled.**

**By biting your tongue purple  
rather than speak.**

It becomes very apparent how much Walker was influenced by Hurston. Not only did she write and dedicate poems about/to her. The theme of women overcoming their apprehensions about speaking up and putting themselves first threads itself through Walker's poetry. Her cry of **'Having no rights. No claims / to make, I could not even coherently / protest.'** could have been uttered by Janie as well as she saw herself powerless against the overbearing nature of Joe Starks. Not even mentioning the fact that Walker actually wrote a poem about Janie Crawford and how she freed herself from her husbands who wanted to use her in different ways. Gotta love these women!

Reading Walker's poetry felt oddly intrusive. She didn't hold anything back. She layed herself bare in her poetry which is an incredibly brave thing to do. I haven't educated myself yet on Walker's biography but I'm definitely interested in researching more about her work and personal life. She seems to be such a fascinating woman!

**At first I did not fight it.  
I loved the suffering.  
It was being alive!  
[...]  
It was my friend Gloria  
who saved me. Whose glance said 'Really,  
you've got to be kidding. Other  
women have already done this  
sort of suffering for you,  
or so I thought.'**

Funnily enough, I also just finished a collection of poetry by Audre Lorde (a contemporary of Walker's) and I was surprised at how similar their messages and ways of writing were, yet how I clicked more with Walker than I did with Lorde. Both women write in a very straight-forward style. They don't try to mask their messages with flowery words or overblown metaphors. Both of them stress the bond (Black) women share with each other and how our strength is build on sisterhood. I think I prefer Walker's words since she seems more humble and laid-back to me. Lorde was quite the intense woman (and she had every right to be but it pulled me out of her poetry at times).

Anyways, I liked the intertextual references in Walker's poetry and that she uplifted the voices of other Black female writers. Apart from Hurston, she also praised the work of Bessie Head, Nella Larson (two queens I definitely want to read from in 2018) and Lorraine Hansberry (a queen I'm already familiar with and love). She also worked her way through Black male pioneers of the 20th century like fellow poet Jean Toomer or Civil Rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

By the way, just like Lorde she appreciated the shift in Malcolm's ideology toward the end of his life where he distanced himself from the patriarchal attitude preached by the Nation of Islam and stressed the importance of independent women:

**that you learned to prefer  
all women free  
and enjoyed a joke  
and loved to laugh.**

In conclusion, I was deeply moved by Walker's poems. The ways she dealt with her father's death, the terror and fear inflicted upon her by raising little black children in a world that had considered no place for them. Her anger and her suffering shone through her poetry and made me connect to her on a visceral level. All in all, I would recommend her poetry (even if it's a little unconventional in style since it's more conversational and colloquial).

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### **The Book says**

I love Alice Walker's poetry.

She writes about feelings and emotions so well, but with such brevity.

I love how she celebrates strength and bravery throughout her work.

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### **Mariana says**

Good poems by this amazing poet.

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### **Yamo says**

Alice Walker came to Lewis and Clark when I attended school there and read the title poem of this book - it made everyone cry. The poem is about her parent's relationship and the tenderness between them. Her mother used to always say to her Father "Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll see you in the morning". When her Mom lost her father and her Mom was having her final moments with his body, she leaned in to kiss her husband and said "Goodnight Willie Lee, see you in the morning".

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### **Keondra Freemyn says**

i mostly gravitate to alice walker's essays but was pleasantly surprised by how much this collection moved me. of all the poetry collections of hers that i've read, this one resonates the most. some favorites are the title poem, 'facing the way,' and 'talking to my grandmother who died poor'

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### **Kate Savage says**

I appreciated Alice Walker's vulnerable heartbreak in here, in poems titled things like "Never Offer Your Heart to Someone Who Eats Hearts" and "Did This Happen to Your Mother? Did Your Sister Throw Up a Lot?"

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## Tristan says

Read in Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems 1965-1990 Complete.

This was the weakest of the three Alice Walker collections I have read; Walker's emotions are as powerful as always, but her lyricism frequently breaks down totally and the collection is saved by a few stellar poems in the middle of the text. These poems were written in the wake of the various assassinations of the 1960s and the failure of Walker's first marriage. Understandably, the treatment of love and relationships is harsh, often bitter, particularly in the poems of the first (and weakest) section "Confession". These poems scream and rant with high clarity and essentially no music, becoming impassioned complaints to an absent god of love: "The last time/I was afflicted by love/I murdered the man./But that was in an earlier century". Even at her most inventive, there is a sense of carelessness, a sense that the thoughts were thrown together--not in the way of a gift of inspiration (Coleridge's claim for "Kubla Khan"), but more like a frazzled cook making a sort of mulligatawny stew, elements added at random without planning or care, only a general hope that the overall effect will come through:

He said: Here is my soul.  
I did not want his soul  
but I am a Southerner  
and very polite.  
I took it lightly  
as it was offered. But did not  
chain it down.  
I loved it and tended  
it. I would hand it back  
as good as new.

The anger of this collection, particularly the first section, was grating, and sometimes got in the way of the poetry, as with "The Abduction of Saints" (about martyrdom and manipulation and assassination), but there were a few fascinating and truly good poems. "Never Offer Your Heart to Someone Who Eats Hearts" was full of dark and powerful imagery of a cruel lover as a literal eater-of-hearts: "Your stewed, overseasoned/heart consumed/he will sop up your grief/with bread". "On Stripping Bark From Myself:" was a wise declaration of personhood:

No. I am finished with living  
for what my mother believes  
for what my brother and father defend  
for what my lover elevates  
for what my sister, blushing, denies or rushes  
to embrace.

The title poem was a tender and musical poem of personal loss, but the best poems were "Early Losses: A Requiem" and "In Uganda An Early King", both of which see Walker transmute her personal and societal anger into stunning moments. In "Early Losses: A Requiem", she says,

To the child that's left  
I offer a sound  
without a promise  
a clue

of what it means.

The sound itself is all.

and in "In Uganda An Early King" she laments mistreatment in the tale of a king who fed his wives until they were too fat to move because fat wives "showed him prosperous" These two longer poems were head and shoulders above the general quality of the book and none of the very short pieces or "poems-of-fragments" were strong, an unusual departure from the skill she showed with that sort of work in the earlier Once. She seems to be shifting away from the use of space to create meaning in her verse, and this book shows a marked departure from the effective use of the technique. On the occasions it is tried, she falls short, perhaps a function of the increasingly intense activist strain running through her poetry as we come to her third collection? It remains to be seen how this change will continue in or affect the next text.

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### **Rogene Carter says**

Such condensed wisdom.

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### **Sarai Lillie says**

My favorite poem in this book was "Never Offer Your Heart to someone who eats Hearts." The imagery in it is very interesting.

Alice Walker is always a favorite of mine. Her writing speaks in a way that a lot of things don't. It is hard to explain, really. I am a middle class white girl who feels Alice Walker's poetry in her soul.

Fun fact: The title comes from the last poem in the book.

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### **book woman says**

What a fantastic composite of poems. Walker deploys skillful, albeit novelistic emplotments to illustrate story, meaning, and poetic precision.

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