

Sometimes you have to play with fire

I am truly an unruly man

a man who in a short life
has seen how ugly
people can be to one another

whose created his fair share of art,
good or bad

whose dipped his loins
in many place,
maybe a few places that I shouldn't have

whose drank some good wines
whose had his nose busted

whose seen some good films
and read some good books

but all that means a hangnail
when what really matters is

I have
an art
I can do from
any street corner
bar room
or roominghouse

and the love of a woman
that makes it all mean something-

I have seen some beautiful things too:
an entire field of wilted sunflowers in Loveland;
paintings by Van Rijn
a rendition of Bach

but none of it
compares to her beauty

she makes my heart

howl like a dog

and I don't like writing sentimental poetry
because most of it is so phony

but my love for her
is one of the only real things
I've encountered

it is straighter and truer
than any line of poetry
I've ever written

because it does not need to be
changed or enhanced
by flashy writing tools

or cheap gimmicks

it does not try to be
or pretend to be

it simply exists
on its own merit

and it is also the hardest thing
I've known

as though I'm climbing
Everest with nothing but
my strong Italian hands

because so many times
I've had to go against my instincts
to kiss her
to show her the kind of love she gives to me
how the very things she thinks are imperfections
are the things I adore most

but when I look toward the summit
I can see the sun coming out
from behind the peak

and it's so stunning
that I have no choice
but to continue on-

it takes moxie,
you've got to live some hope
in a hopeless time

you need to take chances
roll the dice in a dirty alleyway

you need to play with fire a bit
just so you know
you're still capable
of getting burned