**Cozy Apologia – Rita Dove**

I could pick anything and think of you—   
This lamp, the wind-still rain, the glossy blue   
My pen exudes, drying matte, upon the page.   
I could choose any hero, any cause or age   
And, sure as shooting arrows to the heart,   
Astride a dappled mare, legs braced as far apart   
As standing in silver stirrups will allow—   
There you'll be, with furrowed brow   
And chain mail glinting, to set me free:   
One eye smiling, the other firm upon the enemy.   
  
This post-postmodern age is all business: compact disks   
And faxes, a do-it-now-and-take-no-risks   
Event. Today a hurricane is nudging up the coast,   
Oddly male: Big Bad Floyd, who brings a host   
Of daydreams: awkward reminiscences   
Of teenage crushes on worthless boys   
Whose only talent was to kiss you senseless.   
They all had sissy names—Marcel, Percy, Dewey;   
Were thin as licorice and as chewy,   
Sweet with a dark and hollow center. Floyd's   
  
Cussing up a storm. You're bunkered in your   
Aerie, I'm perched in mine   
(Twin desks, computers, hardwood floors):   
We're content, but fall short of the Divine.   
Still, it's embarrassing, this happiness—   
Who's satisfied simply with what's good for us,   
When has the ordinary ever been news?   
And yet, because nothing else will do   
To keep me from melancholy (call it blues),   
I fill this stolen time with you.

When taking a closer look at this poem, it is seen that Rita Dove is talking about someone expressing their love for another.  It is fair to assume that this poem is written from the viewpoint of a woman, given that Rita Dove is a woman, at the beginning reads "For Fred-" who is her husband.  Rita Dove admires this person so much, she cannot think of any words to describe the feeling, yet everything she looks at reminds her of him.  Whenever she feels trapped, this man is always there to keep her safe and set her free.    
  
Knowing that this is not just some childish crush on boys in middle school, she tries to describe how this love takes her away from the current society built around business.  Rita Dove makes a reference to Hurricane Floyd, which was a large, powerful storm that happened along the Atlantic coast in 1999, just four years before this poem was written.  This storm could be a comparison to her memories of crushes on teenage boys in middle school: drastic, but not enough to make a huge difference.  The metaphor explains that just like a hurricane brings bad weather, it is also bringing back bad, awkward memories of teenage boys.  A hurricane has a huge front then a calm center, the eye of the storm.  Those boys came off charming and pleasant, but proved to have nothing but a hollow center.  Dove is pushing away those boys to try to focus on her love right now.  
  
 In the last stanza, she and her husband are both nestled away, safe from the storm.  They are both very happy; just falling short of perfection.  However, the narrator still struggles to realize why someone would want to settle for ordinary. Settling for "alright" is not enough; everything is too plain and typical.  She needs this particular man in her life because he is good for her; he makes her happy.  Dove sees that others may have opinions about this that conflict with her own, but nevertheless; she is not afraid to profess her love.   
  
The rhyme scheme of this poem changes.  In the first two stanzas, the rhyme scheme is a little different but overall very similar.  It creates a lyrical, sing-song feel to the poem, which is a style that Rita Dove is known to do with her work.  The last stanza, however, is different from the other two.  There is still a rhyme scheme, but it is less noticeable and the lyrical-type lines are not as recognizable.  This is also something that Rita Dove is known for: incorporating a couple different styles into her poems, a common knack of most African-American writers.  
  
From the dictionary, the title "Cozy Apologia" literally means "comforted apology."  Rita Dove is probably saying that she is sorry for not being ordinary, but almost in a sarcastic manner.  She has no clue why someone would want to be boring and traditional, so that is why she is "cozy" with being different.  Marrying a German writer, Rita Dove knows that she is not ordinary, nor does she want to be.  She apologizes for not making society happy, but is very content with her own choices.   
  
This poem relates to Rita Dove's own life, and is most likely about her husband, German writer Fred Viebahn.  Dove and Viebahn love each other, but often got ridiculed from the rest of society about who she should be marrying, as Dove and Viebahn both come from completely different backgrounds.  She is from a line of strong African-American families, and he is of complete German descent and lived in Germany for most of his life.  The two share a common love for writing, however, and Rita Dove knew that they were meant for each other.  In the end, just like in this poem, she comes back to pick the one she has loved since the beginning, despite everyone else's opinions.