

Noon Out of Nowhere

Complete Poems and Aphorisms



Alan Harris

Preface

All of the poems and aphorisms in this collection were written between 1963 and 2021 by Alan Harris. They have been previously published online in his website “An Everywhere Oasis” at alharris.com in the form of multiple downloadable PDF books (alharris.com/pdfbooks) but never all together as in this book.

The poems and aphorism sets here are arranged alphabetically by title. The year that each poem was written is part of its copyright notice. Please feel free to share this book (or parts of it) with others. The copyright notices are a formality and are not intended to limit free circulation.

The first poem written was “Continuity” in 1963, and the last poem was “Drifting” in 2021.

Alan Harris

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8-Word Basket

(Original 8-word observations)



If you know what love is, you don't.



Let there be three birds in the bush.



For deepest meditation, nothing is necessary--very necessary.



Butterflies around a puddle don't quote any scriptures.



Most of the time you aren't getting killed.



The past is a compromise between innumerable futures.



Don't fight who's right or wrong who's wrong.



Anyone who likes to compliment finds ready listeners.



Bliss without having suffered is a mental confection.



Doubt fueled by compassion resembles faith without pretense.



The last word is never the last word.

Grief cooks a nourishing oatmeal for the soul.



Whatever you can no longer bear, you do.



Suicides can create absences stronger than many presences.



Fear of death is the mother of law.



Indignation that is righteous is usually your own.



Bosses struggle for years to rise into contempt.



Getting fired means you'll never be the CEO.



Gossip is as despised as it is necessary.



Two agree; three harmonize; six acquiesce; twelve stew.



Waking up is going to sleep from sleeping.

8 x 20

1. If life isn't eternal, who cares what is?
2. Everybody's a town of one with no mayor.
3. For long life, inhale each time you exhale.
4. The tongue inside the brain speaks awfully bravely.
5. A grandmother's love could light a large city.
6. Looking within, one sees little, and grows humbler.
7. Each person is a jewel polished by trouble.
8. Consequences teach what parents and teachers failed to.
9. Good people die, and good people let them.
10. Ideas, when nameable, are ready for the textbooks.
11. The server and the served become mutually obligated.
12. Moods enter children like breezes through open windows.
13. One person lies, two people conspire, three incorporate.
14. Fancy dinners taste somewhat of the hostess's ego.
15. Earth life is a carnival for the soul.
16. Without roses, thorns would be out of business.
17. We develop a fondness for people we help.
18. A baby's future lies in its parents' past.
19. Ignoring people's promises doubles pleasure when they're kept.
20. A library contains millions of pages of maybe.

13 Signs of Bad Luck

It is bad luck if:

1. A pit bull doesn't finish crossing your path.
2. Your psychiatrist falls asleep while you're talking.
3. You discover your broker has renounced monetary gain.
4. You receive a registered letter from your spouse.
5. Your dentist starts to plan a world tour.
6. Our President broadcasts a plea to remain calm.
7. Your doctor starts wanting you to pay ahead.
8. Your PC screeches when you turn it on.
9. Inside the company elevator you begin to float.
10. Your boss begins, "You've been a good employee. . . ."
11. Your flight attendant has strapped on a parachute.
12. The neighbor boy always talks about making fires.
13. Your surgeon has a Band-Aid on his finger.

18 Rules

1. Love truth.
2. Welcome folly.
3. Distrust goals.
4. Laugh deeply.
5. Farm money.
6. Die daily.
7. Give forgetfully.
8. Digest adversity.
9. Bury ambition.
10. Scrutinize motives.
11. Carry silence.
12. Befriend nature.
13. Work restfully.
14. Touch hearts.
15. Trust emptiness.
16. Avoid advising.
17. Break rules.
- 18.

Absence

I always thought that you,
dear friend, had been away
due to a long, far journey.

I thought I knew you well,
although I had no memory
of ever seeing you.

Stirring stories I heard
about your distant deeds,
and I felt a link with you
though never saw your face.

I asked you in my heart,
"How long, how far from here
has questing taken you?
Does destiny intend for me
someday to hear your voice?"

My white-haired years
now tell me it is I
who traveled out upon
that long, far journey.

Soon I will be coming back
to share my life's adventures
with you in a place not
far away nor danger-filled,
a place as near as breath and pulse.

I've missed your easy laugh
and kindly voice, dear friend,
but soon enough we'll meet again
to pray the prayers of ancient days.

Abundance

Listen to abundance--
not only Niagara's thunder
but two mosquitoes whining--

not only the whoosh of rest
but the whoops of errors
and the whew of success.

Abundance is my golly
and Betsy's heavens,
but also the sibilance
of a petunia's petal
falling into grass.

Abundance roars out its yes
and whispers yet more yes--
the best, it is, of the most,
plus the all within the least.

Advice

The wise man advised his son:
Get much knowledge and use it wisely.

This knowledge-loving son advised his son:
Life is short. Get as much pleasure as you can.

This pleasure-loving son advised his son:
Make as much money as you can.

This money-loving son advised his son:
Conquer with power, and rule over others.

This conquering son had a terrible defeat,
had no son, and gave no advice.

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After a Mostness of Hurt

How after a mostness of hurt
does flower a sunrise of joy.
How never does awfulness stay
where planets are children of stars.

How warmly a candle lights up
in blackmost recesses of night.
How grieving and torment give way
to palpable peace in the heart.

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Alma Mater Revisited

The campus seems all hollow
today as I walk in its leaves again.
The marching band warms up in the
distance for a football game of
whumpgrunters and whoopleaders--
but the booming band sounds vacant.
All the music is there--the
brass, the drums, the tearing
and merging of harmonies--
but I am gone, nowhere near it.
The now magicless bookstore I worked in
has shabby Shakespeares languishing
between glossy audio-visual texts and
sterile physical geology workbooks.

Is the college hollow, or am I?
I remember classes where
cocky professors taught
stimulating sensical stuff
which flew the way of
June fireflies after exams.
Hormone-smitten twist dancers
flexed and flirted their nervous bodies
toward flippant connubialities
while I tried to study my brain into a
tested heaven of alphas.
The fatuous sounds of
today's rah-rahs echo as before
among stately buildings that housed
the tenure-drones of worked-over lectures.
Now, whom are we all trying to fool?
College is, I confess, as dead in me
as a syllogism, but supportive America
of a Saturday puts down its newspaper,
pours out a Bud Light, and
remotely emotes from its easychair over
conference headcrunching
seen through colored electrons on glass.

Who died? Did I? Are the college sounds
I hear today on my old campus--the band,
the cheers, the dead leaves underfoot--
any hollower than 25 years ago? No, no,
I heard their emptiness in youth, but
this milieu quickened me then as liberation
from a safely parented childhood
and insurance against an empty future.
After a full life I would be most ungrateful
now to pronounce college dead,
but let us stick with hollow.

America the Beautiful Revisited

America, while breathing gaseous skies,
Converts her amber waves of grain to gold.
She logs her mountains' purple majesty
And risks her fruited plains in futures sold.

How could the selfless pilgrims have foreseen
The fiscal dust their sturdy feet would raise?
When did their quest for freedom of belief
Become obsessed with how much interest pays?

The early heroes' hearts were filled with fire,
Replaced of late by nuclear doomsday fear.
When greed fails in these days to get its way,
Then hired generals flatten all that's dear.

Those patriot dreamers failed to forecast years
Of lotteries and bets on football games,
Nor could they know what poverty and fears
Would lurk in cities bearing brave men's names.

America! My poor America!
Thy crown of brotherhood is hard to see.
Thy god is Gold; thy goodness yields to law,
And lawyers fight from fee to shining fee.

Analogies for Love

Is love a light beam we shine
upon our chosen few of heart,
reflected by them upon us?

Or is love an inner sea
contained by, yet containing us,
in turbulence or pleasing calm?

Does a new mother perceive
in her baby's trusting breath
the force of a new volcano?

As a cup that cannot explain its tea
or a husk that fathoms not its corn,
I cradle love as an infinite infant within.

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Angels of the Sunset

For Those with Open Hearts

Some lucky ones have claimed
to see and even hear an angel
or a host of them presiding in
resplendence over countrysides
or busy city neighborhoods.

Most angels seem to hover just where
bright meets dim, and rarely show
themselves to televisioned eyes
or eyes that scan stock tickers
for the best bonanza yet.

Some people yearn lifelong to see
an angel near their morning porch
or, ill, pray earnest prayers
for healing angels who will
touch them and dispel disease.

Anyone who has a western sky
and something of an inner eye
may sometimes notice sunset angels
in their dance of shifting veils
above the darkening ground.

Concealed and yet revealed
in colors you can see between,
these angels bless in silent bigness
all whose eyes are listening
and all with openness of heart.

So subtle are the wings of angels
that you may not realize
they've come and gone, except
that innerly remains a glowing
which seems just as good as knowing.

Animal Tao

A cat is mostly yin;
of the Cosmos she is the twin.
Like the mysterious Cosmic Laws,
she keeps well-hidden her claws
until some urgent necessity.

A dog is thoroughly yang,
with his boisterous bark and his fang.
Ignoring the subtler laws
and concealing none of his flaws,
he pursues life and cats with avidity.

A dog is always searching,
but a cat is content with perching.
The dog loves to follow his nose,
while the cat simply sits there and--knows.
Activity ends in tranquillity.

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Another Dance

Where are all the little nothings
I spoke to you
when we were young?
I want them back.
You were so precious,
sitting there on the porch swing,
letting me put my hand up under
the back of your blouse
to feel the smoothness
of female skin.
Where is the femininity
that I gave you through my fingers?
I want it back.
Where is the bitchy grouchiness
that I gave you?
I want it back. Give me it.
I gave you my tools
and now you do all the work
and give me your laziness
and bitch at me for it
with the bitchiness I gave you.
Take your laziness back.
Give me back my tools,
and go get your own.
This is a dance we are
dancing,
and I don't want to have
to step on your feet,
so watch carefully
as I lead you into leading me
to lead you.
This is a dance we are
dancing.
Oh, now it's over.
Clap, clap, clap.
But there'll be another.

Another Sonnet to Another Spring

Young Aries climbs the virgin vernal sky
And tickles winter's seeds until they burst
In bright-green chlorophyllous flame, well-nursed
By throbs of heat and chill, of wet and dry.
Earth breathes her gentle procreative sigh
Into a billion billion eggs, her first
Prolific breath of love since blizzards cursed
In Capricorn and cold clouds choked the sky.

When hungry lungs inhale spring's balmy breath
And birds sing out "Rebirth!" from every tree,
Our souls trade withered shrouds of icy death
For flowing robes of immortality.
We read in every birth a crisp new page
Of Nature's Scripture, passed from age to age.

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Aphorisms from "Poor Al's Almanack"

Love of looks is love with hooks.



The man who lends has many friends, but he who shares has fewer cares.



Help a friend, a friend to keep; help a foe, a heaven to reap.



A sharp tongue cuts itself.



The best-laid plans of mice and men too often work.



Dirty hands, clean soul.



A kindly word soars like a bird.



A gift inquired after is a gift not given.



This year's harvest is next year's seed.



Give and live; keep and weep.



An ounce of good will is worth a pound of prevention.



When truth needs a voice, silence lies.



The man who builds his own throne rules over a desert.



Greed is a weed that will harden your garden.



Undeserved praise is like a hair in your milk.



If we could "take it with us," heaven would be an awful clutter.



Her anxiety about life's end makes her piety seem like pretend.



Friends bend where fakes break.



Every face is a picture gallery.



Heaven's mansions are prefabbed on earth.



Love and gravitation keep the universe interesting.



The best comeback is a blank look.



The shallower the brook, the more it babbles.



See with the heart--it never needs glasses.

An Apology for Art

Why more art?
Haven't we enough?

Well, a world of mostly dirt
demands more soap, yes?

A world parched with ugliness
thirsts for sips of beauty, no?

If creativity ever ceases,
that's all the shebang wrote.

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April of the Spirit

In this April Sunday
there is pure spirit
scenting all the air
like a sweet candle.

Spirit runs through me
like light through a prism
and splashes all my glands
with a rainbow of loving.

Spending spirit is a joy
and a joke, for no end
is there to it--
as well spend the sea.

When my brain tunes into
spirit's primordial hum,
there are no surroundings
but the starlit cosmos.

I sing into the center of being
whose bud bursts open
and flowers into a fragrant chant
for April eyes and ears.

Amen says all, sings all
that ever will be sung--
begins and sustains and ends
our euphonious zodiac.

Aroma of Duty

Easter lilies gladden
(and teasingly madden)
the kitchen atmosphere
as I perform and pay income tax
duties
on vocational gettings
(because everybody
needs some of what
I never quite received).

Gifting, I notice,
pleases the law
and reduces the obligation.
"Give and thou shalt deduct."
As a man receives for himself,
so must he give to us all.

Around Easter tide we set right
every least account
with the mighty US
and hope no mistake
will cloud our reputation
or shrink our havings.

IRS laws embody
a sprawling neo-Bible,
rife with moral assumptions
(teeth implicit and feared)
about divorce,
child support,
medical expenses,
the rich man's burden--
tradition all hard-wired.

Inexorably the Old Covenant
is infiltrating my Easter
as potted lilies
perfume my reluctance.

As for Christ, how often
I am invoking him
as these tedious tax forms
dance about under my fragrant lilies!

Arrangements

Dogs fuss with their beds—
people take out mortgages—
for a place to sleep.

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As Below, So Above

Fragrance from flowers
already bloomed gives courage
to the budding ones.

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As Far Beyond As Here

Perhaps your mind, when still, has reached a brink
Beyond which bottom, top, and sides release
Their hold, immersing all you are and think
In boundlessly profound, peculiar peace.

Set free, aware, and only slightly caught
Within the web you've spun of tickling flesh,
You feel you understand why you were brought
To live within earth's tantalizing mesh.

What sage or mystic ever wrote a line
Containing more than hints of what you feel
And almost know to be the life divine
Which tinglings from the vast unknown reveal?

Experienced have you this thunderbolt?
And savored have you since then every volt?

Asking the Quiet Fire

The Forest As Teacher

I ask the autumn forest where
my grandmother has gone.

The quiet fire replies,
"On down this road,
around a further bend."

I ask why she has gone so far.

Again I hear the forest's quiet fire,
"She isn't far, not far at all."

I ask the forest why
its leaves are turning color.

"Only to allow their
falling down to earth
to make a fertile mattress
for the winter snow."

I ask the forest
whether I myself am
turning color
like these leaves.

The forest answers,
"Yes, your life is cyclical,
like that of leaves,
and all you've done
will fall away
to fertilize your
next encounter
with the summer sun."

I ask why there is
human pain and error.

Soon the forest says,
"There is a larger scheme
within which solitary lives abide.
My scattered twigs may fall,
whole trunks break off,
but underneath these failures
lies an all-embracing safety.
Twigs born high fall low,
and so it is with human beings,
but pain and error feed
the healthy breathings, in and out,
of greater lungs than yours."

I ask how trees remember
where their sap is kept in winter.

Patiently the forest says,
"Communities of roots
contain an underknowing
as to where all sap
and nourishment belong,
just as your deepest sleep
allows reentry into wakefulness
with no lost memory
and even increased energy.
You move about, and yet
your rootedness remains."

I ask the forest how
disease and selfishness
can be allowed
within the same grand scheme
that makes a splash of colors
beautify the autumn months.

The forest turns my vision
to a tree half-fallen,
yet held up by neighbor trees.
It then inquires of me,
"If all were health,
then where would people learn
the golden art of altruism?"

I ask the forest why
some people suffer
from events they've
had no part in causing.

Pausing at this question,
it replies, "Like forest life,
humanity is fully interwoven.
Say that I'm a healthy branch
but on a sickly tree,
and fall to earth one day
along with this whole tree
whose weakness in the trunk
gives way to heavy winds.
But I'm not just this hapless branch,
now fallen in my prime--
I'm also Forest as a whole.
The spring will see me sprout again
as leaf or branch exactly where
some sapling may have need of me."

I ask the forest
to suppose all trees
were burned away,
and every human died--
what then?

"You ask me more
than forests know,
but never doubt

with such an earth as this,
where air and water flow,
where soil and lightning meet--
that here the Silent Force
may manifest itself as life,
and grow again.

In fact, my roots feel far
beyond their depth
to areas of sustenance
where life is all there is."

I ask the forest who it was
that made this scheme
of life and death.

I look at trees and sky and soil
while waiting for an answer.

All around and all within
is silence.

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At Sea

I work very hard and I tire--
when will this work be done?
I long for sweet enlightenment
to provide a blissful rest.

*If contentment is enlightenment,
then a cow is Buddha. Rest, yes,
but within the work is the bliss.
Just smell any swamp in repose.*

I want to walk the path
but how without a teacher?
So many paths are beckoning
that I'm at sea with confusion.

*At sea is a good place to be
beneath millions of stars,
each at one time bewildered
but now guiding your journey.*

I feel that I may be ready
but the teachers appearing seem
prophets eyeing their profits,
unschooled in even honesty.

*Will your teacher knock at your door?
Be found on some random sidewalk?
Have you listened? Inwardly heard?
Serve and create; serve and listen.*

At the Abattoir

Splat.
Grunt.
Plop.

We feed the world,
Except for bloodless vegetarians.
Come hither, sweet swine,
And we will make you useful,
Oh, so useful to mankind:

Thud.
Rip.
Crack.
Slit.

Cow, your life-long destiny is consummated here.
Your epitaph reads "Grade A, choice;"
Your burial ground, the maw of man,
Is decorated with two rows
Of tombstone teeth.

Remember, as you face the club,
Your life perhaps has been in vain,
But not your death.
You die to serve a greater cause than you:
The betterment of man, who talks and reads.

Chop.

Atlantis on My Mind

The existence of Atlantis,
like that of God,
is debated by the wise
and the foolish.

I could think that evil
was powerful enough,
when really horrid,
to pull down a continent,
with God's able help.

Kings are human enough
to go completely sour,
and priests corrupt the boys
to Papal tones of "tut-tut."

Evil isn't overlooked, but
is tucked away in cosmic
folds for later outworking
as with a storage battery.

Atlantis had a big problem,
and we here have our deeds
of various darkness and light,
unable to weigh the whole.

We have and will have help.

August Sunday

Pounding hammers sing
along with church choir anthem--
confusing rhythms.

Depth of azure sky
recedes to far galaxies
behind daylit moon.

A leaf waves gently
in a breath from summer's lungs,
then hangs green and still.

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Autumn Glimpses

Autumn's puffy wind
tickles my maple silly--
the leaves die laughing.



Lifelong summer's leaves
flutter down through fall's abyss
to safe root places.



Through deep leaves we tread,
seashore sounds in mid-forest
rasping at our feet.

Ball Game

He came home from school and slammed the front door
from habit.

"Mom," he called.

"Yes?"

"Where's my baseball and bat and glove?"

"I don't know. You'll have to look for them."

"Okay."

He rummaged in the kitchen closet for a minute or two
then walked heavily across the kitchen.

"Did you find them?" he heard from upstairs.

"Yes, Mom. Thanks."

He walked out the back door empty-handed
and walked due north for what seemed to be
two or three hours.

He kept his path as straight as he could
and climbed over fences
and other obstacles.

He even swam across a creek or two—
or waded, one.

He sort of flapped his arms and sort of flew up
above the whole town and sort of looked around
and was glad that he could fly and no one else could.

But then all of a sudden
the novelty sort of fell off the whole thing

so he flew down
and landed in the back yard
and walked into the house
and slammed the back door sort of hard

and she said
did you have a good game
and he said yes.

Beauty

Soon after sundown tonight
leftover orange fades upward
into night's deepening blue
above our row of poplars.

How does a sky do this?
It looks so easy.
Such beauty is free to see
yet invites a seeing into.

Who is living behind this beauty?
No name is being spoken to me
but there's an inner rush as if
some Friend from space is near.

Beneath a Flirtation

A trembling in your hand
as you speak with it
tells me a story far deeper
than the message in your voice.

Your eyes glance to the side
then bounce back to our center,
penetrating my defenses
with a direct melt.

Clever words dance about
your acrobatic tongue,
and we laugh at their ballet
when the sentence ends.

Where is your soul hiding
inside this communication?
What messages are you
sublimating into my inner ear?

I'm hearing a cry for help and love
from deep inside your lilting voice.
I would offer to rescue you,
but I'm nowhere safe myself.

Let us just enjoy our fan dance
of foxy phrases and fencing eyes,
of flashing hands and smiles,
of gambling give and tricky take.

Quickly as our conversation may
cavort and twist and frolic,
its loving undermeaning remains
calm as Mona Lisa's smile.

Benediction for 2000

Long beheld, this cosmic date
brought in a spook named Y2K
and a few predicted woes,
but still we move along,
up, beyond, in,
planting fresh creative seeds,
casting away old husks,
dropping vestigial outlooks
because lacking in heart or
confined to the seeable or
opposing a grander flow.

Busy in a planetary spiral
around day's fiery light,
we persist in our journey
toward an infinite unknown,
trusting that humanity's
third-millennial lungs
will always find new vigor
while blowing away
the dismal dust of death.

We feel deep awe for all
that has ever happened
but marvel even more that
anything at all can happen.
Infused and confused within
the unfolding Cosmic Aim,
we seal our past in glass
and welcome, as all there is
and will be, our future.

Beside the X

Today I opened
a checking account,
helped by a friendly
banker lady who
pointed to all the X's.

She took my driver's
license and called
a phone number
to make sure
people think
I'm honest.

After the bank finally
permitted me to let it
profit from my money,
I walked outdoors
with only lockbox keys
and deposit slip as
evidence of worth.

How many bank accounts
will I end up having?
Is this one the last?
(I get like this sometimes.)

After I'm finished,
will someone empty
the lockbox for me?
Turn in both keys?

Will a bank clerk
close my account
efficiently while
planning dinner?

Will the friendly
banker lady be
pointing to X's
for someone new?

Will anyone know
what's beside my X
as it goes through
the shredder?

Bidentity

Beware, They warned;
Scoff, We scorned.
A pernicious disparity of essences shall be thy blight, said They;
Love merges divisions to conquer all, We Two replied.

Time wore on and us.
Time found our seaming,
Rotted away the silly thread,
Laid bare two essences, unjoined.

We cried, Woe: We lie in the palpitating entrails of
Circumstance, never to be ejected: Woe.
Then stopped.
Reasoned:
Who despairs at one disparity
Must perish in a human crowd.
Traded a sob for a synthetic:
Be, difference;
Viva.
For now we are a pair.

Big Smile

Big Bang
is a fashion
of imposter
proportions,
insultingly
pat.

If true,
where did it
happen and
where were
all the other
wheres where it
didn't happen?

Simple theory,
it is,
suspiciously
reminiscent of
how each body
of us is a
big bang
out of
our mother.
Presto.
Pat.

Four questions:

Is all that exists
and all that insists
atomic?

What universe
did our universe
outbang from?

Was there love
pre-bang?

Was there wine
at a quarter till time?

Observers delight
to tinker with
hunks big and tiny,
but couldn't folks ask if
a grand benevolence
flowing beneath
and between
all hunkness
smiled atoms
into every allness,
big bang or no?

Could that Big Smile
be lightlessly glowing
through all times of time
as ungenesised Watcher,
bemused by
flashchanging
its cosmic clothing
behind screens
of stars?

The Big Bang's surmise
makes a neat stitch in time,
but the Big Smile
feels more like eternity.

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Bird Omens

When you go for a walk
in your nearby forest,
you see pairs of cardinals
and thrill to their singing.

One time you overheard
two owls conversing
between bare trees.

In summer you have
stared breathless
at a heron standing
Samadhi-like
beside your lake.

Birds of beauty
want to be near you.
Your heart flies up
with these fliers
and knows into
their knowing.

Today as I walked
across an open field,
hundreds of crows
flew overhead,
snidely cawing from
confusing clouds
of cacophony.

After they were gone,
I walked on in silence
and knew nothing.

Bittersweet

You hurt and struggle.
You are ripped apart
like a coupon out of a newspaper.
How can you or I mend you?

When the spirit bleeds,
words are worthless,
sympathy simpleminded,
blessings empty.

I hurt too.
My soul slogs along under
fearsome boredom
and capricious desires.

I am a blip in a flippant universe
wishing for an exciting peace,
a pleasant insecurity,
but I waste away in dull comfort.

Cry your tears into this saucer
as I cry mine there too.
Let us mix them now together
and drink a quaint communion.

We may be maudlin,
stupid and sentimental,
but love tasted in tears
is heady wine against sorrow.

Blissful Baby

New in a pink body
now plied with milk,
you sleep somewhere
beyond vulnerability.

Where do you go?
What are you seeing?
Weary parents envy
your guarded nirvana.

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Blue Sky in Buckets

I asked the blue sky today
why people suffer.
It must not have known,
for it just stayed blue.

I asked my friend
why people suffer.
He said because they try
to stuff the blue sky
into their little buckets
and fail.

But the blue sky comes all
the way down to the ground.
It fills every bucket that's not full
of something else already.

So how do we not suffer?
Just dump out our buckets
and breathe easy.
No stuffing necessary.

Body

If you have
a body,
you'll be fine.

If you are
your body,
trouble ahead.

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Bond

I
am the
you
that you can't
control.

You
are the
I
that I can't
admit.

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Briefing

Here is who you will be:

I. M. Ego
#1 My Place
Selfville, Body

Remember your address
and don't neglect
to decorate your walls and
keep your place unsoiled.

You need to live here, yes,
because your past exertions
somehow built this place
according to your own design.

Here you'll be safe,
with one catch--
you may not think
you are.

"Ego" has grown to be
an ugly word,
you'll notice, but it
only means your walls.

How could you reach
a later hatching into light
if forced to learn and grow
unsheltered by these walls?

Now go, be, love, talk,
laugh, err, create, teach,
glimpse and lose and
glimpse the light again.

Anything is permissible but
everything is accountable
while living in this dwelling
that restrains while it protects--

until the day you hatch
into the waiting sunlight
with a realized reaping
and a grateful weeping.

Bug in My Kitchen

Let me guess,
box-elder bug
on my kitchen floor,
that you know neither
how you came
to be lost in here
nor how you will
get out--but you will.

Fright-propelled boat,
six-oared, you worry
the woodwork then
hasten across
the open gloss
and disappear
beneath my stove.

I shall not hunt you
nor shall we ever
meet again.

I am just as adrift
on this waxed world
as you were on my floor,
and yet I feel certain
I will someday find
a serendipitous stove
to mask my out-passing.

The Builders

Temple: none but spirit
Book: an open heart
Mission: help to give
Path: up past the known

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Bunga Rucka

We are murmurs we know nothing
Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka
We live down above exactness
Nothing say we nothing say we

Here between between we listen
Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka
Nothing here no nothing here
Below the Bunga Rucka line

No speaking here no words not one
No thinking down in under here
More underneath than want or wish
Where where is never when is nowhere

Happy laughter high and deep goes
Snortle chortle yukka yukka
Sweet it sounds above our silent
Seepings in and in and in where

Bunga Rucka know no knowledge
Bunga Rucka love all loving
Bunga Rucka shine all darkness
Bunga Rucka shout all silence

Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka
Feel us in you Bunga Rucka
Feel you in us Bunga Rucka
Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka

Butterflight

A new monarch
just out of its cocoon
flits over the yard
over the city park
over sweet marigolds
over two boys playing catch
over a white-haired man
working on his 1966 Chevy
over an Amway salesman
with his bulging briefcase

back and fitfully forth
dodging into a rose bush
sipping necessary nectar
flying quickly up again
over lawns and fences

never to be seen twice
by surprised admirers
along its jerky flight
to a final destination
farther away than
anyone can imagine

Caregiving

As one ages,
so do others
in the family
of humanity
who need help
continuingly.

How say no
to those who
can't or won't
help themselves?

If I were they,
would I not
reach out for
a helper's hand?

It is too hard
to be too hard
when the heart
is called upon
to be softer.

Cat Lying Down

When my cat lies down,
it is with utmost
gravity.

No circular trampling first
like a clumsy canine,
no great sigh
like a human
being on a couch.

My cat lies down slowly,
naturally,
smoothly,
participating with
controlled abandon
in a dignified
gravitational event.

The Child

Hello, little man, what are you doing here?

I just want to have a part in your life.

What would you like to do?

I would like to play and laugh.

How would you propose we do that?

Just throw everything up in the air sometimes, and let it all go.

No, we can't do that. It wouldn't be respectable.

Well, I want to play, and you won't let me.

OK, then, let yourself play a little. I'll look the other way.

I'll play over here in the corner with my sand toys.

Who are you? Why are you in here wanting to play?

I'm just somebody who is here like you are. We're here together.

Would you like to ride on my shoulders?

Yes, that would be fun.

OK, up you go.

Now we're really high, aren't we? I like this.

You have to sit still. I can't hold you if you're wiggling around.

Wow! This is fun. Why don't we do this all day?

I might get tired. Besides, what would people say if I had you all day?

They might say you were having fun.

Yes, this is kind of fun. Let's do this some more.

Now you can put me down. That's enough fun.

Who are you? You look familiar.

I am you before you got respectable.

Christmas Awakening

From the mantel, stockings
packed with Christmas
tinyness and sweets
dimly hang at 3 a.m.

Cold wind outside
shakes and snaps the house.
The dog is asleep on the couch.

This artificial tree, lights off, points
second-floorward with wrapped
bounty beautifully beneath it,
testimony that goods are good
and glitter is better.

The dog sighs and turns over.

From underneath,
the furnace exhales warmly
upon tree ornaments
livingly aquiver.

All else is motionless,
and less,
except for the dog
now snoring on the couch.

What if this--
right here, this instant--
is Christmas?

What if this quiet room
is flooded with the future?

What if an unseen star
is shining here,
lighting the way
to a new beginning?

What room, I wonder,
is this? Do we have here
a manger?

The dog sleeps deeply.
The room is ready.
One waits.

Christmas Haiku

Ice on pine needles--
can it hear the Christmas bells?
Can anything not?



Spider in the drain--
Christmas whoops in the parlor--
silent, dark, the drain.



Scrub Christmas tree, bare--
rooms echo--furniture gone--
mother and child laugh.



Sleigh ride all finished--
the mare, eating Christmas oats,
hears house noise, and snorts.



Flashing Christmas lights
entrance three speechless patients
slouched in parked wheelchairs.



Tree's all taken down--
year's end--where is Christmas now?
Deep within each pulse.

A Christmas Light

At Christmas some will doubt--
they'd rather see first-hand
the legendary holy child
than hear fine stories told.

Some legends place a star
above the manger scene
to be a beacon guide
to men who had wise gifts--

but if a body of heaven
were wanted to remind folks
nowadays of this child
who was gifted and gave,

why not the unassuming moon,
whose quiet beaming gives
us all an inner warmth
akin to Yuletide happiness?

Humbly shines this second light,
relaying solar guiding rays
to people lost within a night
who wish to find a path.

Who hasn't sometimes wished
to thank the moon for glowing
above a ride back home
from church on Christmas Eve?

The lowly moon a Christmas light?
How daily seem its rays to us--
no special star sent from afar
that never will be seen again.

If peace and softness were
required, the moon has both.
If mystery were needed,
where could more be found?

Perhaps someone is in the moon,
as nursery rhymes suggest--
let's grant this may be true,
and this man or woman is you.

The moon inside you is
your inner manger birth,
and you inside the moon
shine gifts upon the earth.

City Spill

Chicago traffic this morning
roars and beeps
like a cheap video game.

Freakishly, at Wells and Adams,
a speeding bicyclist's paper sack
spills his stash of shiny bagels
all over Wells Street.

Heads turn.

Two dozen bagels kiss the street
at crazy angles,
then goofily twirl on empty centers
until gravity calms them down
in front of some cars at the light.

The bicyclist jerks his vehicle
over to the curb while hissing
inaudible words of concern.

Wells Street, now set like
a sudden breakfast table,
displays to the public
a tasty temptation
with not one taker.

Idling cars restrained
before the strewn bagels
by a red light
now turning green
begin to roll bagelward.

As if witnessing
a friend's execution,
the bicyclist clutches
his empty sack and
glares with grim indignity
at the squashings.

Claire de Lune

Uncle Bill's piano rolls mellowly along,
Touching dim moods and whispering old warmth.
In its ethereal arc outside the window
The full moon is smooth and slow.

As Uncle Bill's fingers coax the keys
His cigar in the heavy green ashtray
Emits a flimsy plume of fragrance.
The smoke, like Debussy's essence,
Rises straight up and flutters a bit
Before it disappears.

Aunt Martha's supper dishes
Clatter a counterpoint in the sink.

Clouds

A Study in One Act

I've opened the curtain of my east window here above my desk, and I sit now in a holy theater before a sky-blue stage. A little cloud above the neighbor's trees resembles Jimmy Durante's nose for a while, then becomes amorphous as it slips on north. Other clouds follow, big and little and tiny on their march toward whereness. Wisps of them lead or droop because there must always be leading and drooping.

The trees seem to laugh at the clouds while yet reaching for them with swaying branches. Trees must think that they are real, rooted, somebody, and that perhaps the clouds are only tickled water which sometimes blocks their sun. But trees are clouds, too, of green leaves-- clouds that only move a little. Trees grow and change and dissipate like their airborne cousins.

And what am I but a cloud of thoughts and feelings and aspirations? Don't I put out tentative mists here and there? Don't I occasionally appear to other people as a ridiculous shape of thoughts without my intending to? Don't I drift toward the north when I feel the breezes of love and the warmth of compassion?

If clouds are beings, and beings are clouds, are we not all well advised to drift, to feel the wind tucking us in here and plucking us out there? Are we such rock-hard bodily lumps as we imagine?

Drift, let me. Sing to the sky, will I. One in many, are we. Let us breathe the breeze and find therein our roots in the spirit.

I close the curtain now, feeling broader, fresher. The act is over. Applause is sweeping through the trees.

Colorado Joining, 1995

Jim & Annette Campbell

Greg & Lois Harris

Art & Jeanette Mark

Ralph & Jeanne Wiley

Alan & Linda Harris

Five couples,
each married within a love
they cannot explain--

Five couples,
amply tested by fear and the unexpected--

Five couples,
totaling more than 500 years
on this sweet, dangerous earth--

Five couples,
homes scattered across the map
like peppers across a pizza--

Five couples
congregated for a week in the same house
like ten peas in a pod--

Five couples
who know the grieving and groaning of loss--

Five couples
who know the ecstasy of tearful laughing--

Five couples
discovering their unknown way
as they walk together
in grace and joy and love.

Columbus Day, 1980

There are no poems now.

Now there is a hypnotic hum,
A purr of the practical.

I could have written about
The soft tomblake canyon
We walked in today.

I could have captured three chipmunks
In a verbal cage somehow.

There could have been quaint failures
At describing gold-plated trees.

Irony might have jailed the camera-clicking
Kid-scolders bepeopling the park.

A childish whoop reverberating
from the bottom of the canyon
Could have lingered at the end of the poem.

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Come Home to Christmas

If worldly searching brings no lasting joy
or grasping ego causes loss of friends,
come home to Christmas.

If monetary loss appears long-term
or health is gone and only pain remains,
come home to Christmas.

If grief or sadness overwhelms your soul
for no one can replace a loved one lost,
come home to Christmas.

If winter in your life hides warmer times
and no one seems to feel the cold you feel,
come home to Christmas.

If family has disappeared from view
and memories offer nothing but a void,
come home to Christmas.

It is an inner place where calm awaits—
a comforting and ease for misery.
Come home to Christmas.

Commuter Queries the Sun

My trusty train
hauls me orangeward
from this 5 o'clock
plastic city into
an on-time sunset.

Fried-egg friend,
over easy
in the wispy west,
innerly whisper me
what you are.
A star?
Yes, but are
you a you
or merely a major it?

May I commune
with you in
the hollow of
my heart?
Dissolve shallow
knowledge?
Understand you?

Humbly may I harvest
your richer spectrum
than my life
in the office
offers?

If I knew you,
would I be you?
To reach your light
must I groan with long
effort and escalation?
Or simply relax with
easy exhalation?

Unanswering,
you fold
the shimmering cloudy
whites around your
blazing yolk and
drop away.

Breath of good night
is felt below
my horizon.

Suddenly I see
you shooting aloft
for thirty seconds
a brilliant vertical
shaft of orange
as if to acknowledge
we know we know
each other.

My train trundles on.

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Commuting past the 'Hood

**The 'hood is the 'hood is the 'hood, where a throb in the heart
can keep time, keep time with a sturdy song too blue for the too too.**

Through the train window
I notice inhabited shells
south of the tracks--
hollow-windowed,
mottle-roofed homes.

Open-hooded engineless
cars rust under giant
cottonwoods littering broken
sidewalks leading to front doors
opening into TVs never not on.

Perhaps some brutal mothers
feel free to batter TV-addled
children in these houses,
loose cages to be escaped
for safety in the streets.

Perhaps some fathers are
secrets or stray away
or land jobs in fall-apart
factories for just enough
cash to prolong starvation.

Within this silver train
suburbanites glide safely past
the 'hood with eyes in newspapers
or closed in sleeping bliss,
unaware and uncaring that

south of these tracks might
thrive a rugged richness
not understood by well-fed
hardwood-floor owners
accustomed to gourmet coffee.

Further on, west of the city,
suburban houses appear
all slick and pretty
as polished pain,
some of them transmitting

false alarms to uncaring cops,
some of them serving as
highly mortgaged
coffins for lives
deceased at the roots.

Hand-to-mouth 'hood dwellers
grapple and make do and laugh,
clutch most any prize and die,
few of them ever aspiring
to climb a dollar ladder

or pass away like
moneyed mortals,
trusts all set up,
who shatter as richly
as a falling chandelier.

Confined

Nothing but a precise
second hand is moving within
the solitary stillness of this house.
I convalesce and convalesce while
reading the daily wallpaper.

Knickknacks cling tightly
to their positions, dumbly
flaunting their faded novelty
close to books of past power
that slump on their shelves
like half-fallen dominoes.

Fatigued by the familiar and
glued down by gravity,
I lie back, later sit up,
then move about,
then sit again,
a restless captive of
fever and furnishings.

Every other person
in the world just now is
elsewhere and occupied.
Have I secretly died?
"Snap," replies the
house, settling.

I lie back down close to my
accurate quartz-driven clock
whose second hand counts out
sixty clockwise clicks and
on and on until
the wallpaper blurs
and nothing occurs.

Contemplating Shirley

We worked well together
selling mystical books
to mystical people,
honoring their Visa cards
and their souls.

Our store was fragrant with packaged incense
and alive with hermetic energy from crystals.
Our books contained
the most magnificent perceptions
that money can open windows
into.

We played music all day
of flutes and harps
to reach our customers' hearts.
In a kind of preheaven we glided
through our store hours
with no eye to the time
or the weather outside.

There was the cancer, yes.
It sounded an undertone
in your voice
and added a depth to your eyes.
The chemo stole your hair
for a while but you kept on
selling inspired books
on healing and wholeness
until your curls grew back,
more blond and beautiful
than ever.

Now your body has transformed
into a clear vapor and a few ashes,
but I still see your warm eyes
and reserved smile
as clearly as when body
was your instrument of being.
I hear your quiet voice,
not the words but the quality,
and I know you are fine.
You left behind a gentler world
to come back to.

Continuity

Yesterday the sun went down;
this morning it came up--

as it has,
as it will.

A nagging question plagues philosophers:
why does the sun rise in the East at dawn
instead of rising in the West at eve?
They meant to solve this problem yesterday;
they met with failure once again today--

as they have,
as they will.

While one wise solver contemplates,
twelve folks toil to fill their plates.
Some produce, some sell their wares;
all seek exit from their cares--
one of which is not the sun
(save that their day's work is done).
West or East or Dawn or Eve
to philosophers they leave--

as they have,
as they will.

Counting to One

How many skies
has the boomeranging
moon flown over?
One, which breathes.

How many lives
have you and I lived?
One, deepening inside
births and deaths.

How many humans
are in the world?
One, with splendidly
many bodies and souls.

How many religions
are there?
One, tucked into
softest of hearts.

How many universes?
Count to one
until the stars
fall out of it.

How many questions
are there?
One big one.

What is the question?
That's it.

Crack the Sky

I cracked the sky
And all the stars fell
Into a pool
Like egg yolks.

I threw the crescent moon
Like a boomerang
But it returned
To its distance.

I pried the earth loose
From the sun
But gravity broke my lever
And the earth stayed.

So I just fixed
A star omelet
And ate the universe.
At least something worked.

The Cry of Everything

Where the crow twitters
and the bluebird cackles,
there is the cry of everything.

Bees moo and ducks roar;
horses croak and rocks snore.

The cry of everything, yes all of all,
fills creation and non-creation
with the delectable din
of a monstrous pin
drop.

Screen nothing out;
mute nothing.
All is here but for an eternal moment,
a timeless flicker of the sun.

And when the cry of everything dies out--
well, won't that be grand too?

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From *An Everywhere Oasis* at www.alharris.com

Dad's Henry J

Dad and we three boys
rode to the farm and back
in our 1950 Henry J
created by Kaiser-Frazer
during their waning years.

It had three speeds
more or less forward.
Reverse required expertise
lest the gearshift lever
do a free-fall all the way
over to the left.

Dad's black Henry J
had tail fins for sport,
two doors, and a sloping
but hatchless back.
Holes gradually rusted
through the floorboard.
It was a piece of junk
that somehow got loved
and joked about
and used every day.

Its oil pressure light
was never not on unless
the ignition was turned off,
but the engine forgave us
since we gave it oil every
two or three days.

Back seat sitting was
decidedly disergonomic,
but two of us sat there.
We might be snuggling
against a chain saw
or some fertilizer sacks
or old combine parts.

We three boys devised
subterfuges to achieve
riding in the front seat.
We'd hang back so as
to be the last one in.
But Dad was onto us--
if we dallied, he'd tell us
to come on and get in.

We'd spend hot hours
cutting weeds, Dad with
tractor (lucky cuss got
to sit down all day) and
we with reluctant hoes
ritually file-sharpened

each humid morning.
After a too-long day
we'd "knock off"
(Dad's phrase) and
maneuver for our seat
in the Henry J
by ever so politely
letting others go first.

Four cylinders,
sometimes only three,
pulled four weedkillers
back into town
where we lived.
A rain might splot
the windshield's dust
and be smeared around
by the one wiper
that had a blade.

Dad would never stop
at that last stop sign
before our house--
said it wasn't worth
the extra wear and tear
on the Henry J.

Out we would pile,
wary of hidden saw blades,
and the Henry J's doors
would close with a clunk
plus extra little sounds.

Dad bought our Henry J
for \$200 from a local man
aptly nicknamed Bargain Art,
and after about fifteen years
of his nursing the car with oil,
makeshift parts, and patience,
it completely quit.

Then for another ten years
it stood in our farmyard,
tombstone to itself,
until Dad finally sold it
to a collector while
preparing himself
to die.

Daresayings

**1999-2002
by Alan Harris**

**These aphorisms, all original, were first
introduced in "Thinker's Daily Ponderable"**

Rush, and the entire universe is in your way.



Religions seem to hook into different parts of the sky.



If the future is infinite, mortality may be a passing fad.



The ground keeps us bound, but the sky tells us why.



To count marbles: one, two, three, four.
To count humans: one, one, one, one.



Competition is the ego's journey; contemplation, the soul's.



The best wars never start, and all the others last far too long.



Imposing virtue upon others is like trying to paint raindrops.



Free choice is everywhere; freedom from consequences is nowhere.



Where love is the root, gratitude is the flower.



The unforgiving are the most likely to do the unforgivable.



Heaven isn't far--in fact, it's hugging us.



Irritation is a universal poison for which forgiveness is a universal antidote.



Love isn't a question of multiple choice.



Precisely where you're not getting is where you may not be giving.



Kilter is rarely noticed until something goes out of it.



Evolution is apparently endless on both ends.



To find out is human; to find in, divine.



For every day that you hang on a cliff, you get a wider view of life.



We are often blinded by what we can see, or paralyzed by what we can do.



Said love is maybe; realized love is yes.



Beginnings whoop; endings weep.



If there were a drug to reduce ego, would it sell?



Clocks accurately tick while time slips away like a black cat in the night.



Many would like to become great, but being alive is a hindrance
and being dead is distasteful.



The ethically blind see themselves everywhere they go.



A strong person has weak moments and is strengthened by each one.



"Smile" is an anagram of "slime"--and also a path through it.



There is nothing in this world but everything, and it can't all happen in a day.



For every question conceived in the mind, an answer resides in the heart.



Living it up usually takes far less time than living it down.



Tears talk to heaven, and heaven answers.



An opportunity without opportunists is as rare as a cowflop without flies.



Desperation gives Cupid quick wings.



This is the first minute of the rest of your hour.



Good giving brings good gifts, and well-thinking fills the air with well-being.



Killed time gets even.



So much depends on love that you'd think more people would use it.



The ability to fly high on life's trapeze doesn't
mean one is any good on life's tightrope.



Chaos you shall always have with you, and also overcontrol--try love.



Philosophies are a paradigm a dozen, but if they don't acknowledge love,
they fall away like leaves.



A house has square feet; a home has footsteps.



Opportunity breeds opportunism breeds misfortune breeds opportunity.



"With our amazing product you will grow healthier every year until you die in perfect health."



To demand good but not to give is a recipe for personal stink.



When a new door opens, its hinges may be lubricated by your tears.



Authority without love is a universal poison.



Affectation is wealth's poverty.



With leaders we build; with rulers we cope.



As you take a step, the step takes you.



If your guru charges, retreat.



With every beat the heart is jumping for joy, though the mind may be doubting and pouting in heedless gloom.



Plants reach out for the light, while humans reach in.



Charity and software piracy both begin at home.



There is no freedom from freedom--it endlessly compels us to do as we choose.



The heart is the best advisor, and also the nearest.



After formal education has dazzled and dismayed,
root errors bring on root learning.



We carry the sky in our lungs and the earth in our wallets.



Stupidity and genius are equally unpredictable.



There is joy ahead but much work. There is work ahead but much joy.



What is to be will unfold and unfold,
and flowers may bloom from the mold.



A country's Gross National Gullibility closely parallels its Gross National Greed.



Wisdom from words fades away,
but wisdom from anguish remains and remains.



The brain is a museum of the past, the heart a garden of the future.



A friendship can go no deeper than the confiding.



Weak warriors kill bodies; strong warriors win hearts.



Adversity can engender achievement,
whereas aimless comfort is a living cemetery.



The light never goes out, but sometimes we need to go in and fetch it.



Walking barefoot in grass makes your understanding tingle.



Isn't life intrusive?



The candle lights a way to peace; the heart lights a way to joy.



To measure quality is the ultimate fantasy of the quantitative.



In the dear school of experience, gentleness is our finest achievement.



"All of our operators are still busy helping others.
We appreciate your patience. In fact, we take it to the bank."



Truth can be stranger than fiction,
but poetry can be stranger than either.



It takes a long time to hurry, but now comes quick as a thought.



Our gift isn't that we have, but that we see.



Love isn't fussy, but it works best where there is
a universe, attraction, infinity, and time.



It's folly to destroy truth, whatever its costume or yours.



The freshest ideas are also the oldest.



A thought between two bites of a sandwich can change your destiny.



If not by love, then by law.



Wisdom is knowledge dampened with tears.



Ask not whether they'll hire you; ask what good they're doing for folks.



Brilliance without altruism is a cut flower.



Opposites attract, opposites butt heads, and opposites make up.



Stronger than most armor are motives clean and seen.



Flattery and fishing give hooked gifts.



Reversals for the body are rehearsals for the spirit.



Good forever gathers what evil blindly scatters.



Your real name can't be spelled or pronounced--only lived.



The wealthy feel wise, and the wise feel wealthy.



Poets and prisms make rainless rainbows.



Who can talk the flower out of blooming?



Beauty is nearer than your eye, more distant than the faintest star.



What makes a writer write is what makes a breather breathe--
alternatives are severely limited.



"Opposites attract" makes for stable atoms and amazing marriages.



Aging has acquired a bad reputation,
but it's a wonderful way to stay alive.



A lighted candle has no fear of the dark.



Each person is a statue of his or her soul.



A dangerous place to stand is in the way of
someone else's highest calling.



Knock, then realize you've always been inside.



Words can be bombs, balloons, or communion cups,
depending on what we put in them.



Compete, and everywhere, competitors;
cooperate, and everywhere, culture.



When you've been patient long enough,
you get to be patient some more.



Profound blessings move slowly because so much moves.



Earth life is a subset of poetry.



Wherever you find some ground, break it.



Turvy

I rise to sleep
some bliss to take
then fall awake
to earn my keep.



Each life is a leaf that knows little of the whole tree.



The flowers never charge the bees
and pea pods don't invest their peas
but bipeds have such minds for fees
that if they could they'd sell the breeze.



A low bureaucrat looks busy and isn't,
while a high bureaucrat simply isn't.



Law of Kitchens: Two people working in a kitchen will be in each other's way about every 20 seconds.

Corollary: Every 10 seconds if spouses.



It is efficient to be patient about several things at once.



We are poor in what we think we own.



All roads out are blocked
by this rockslide in your mind?
All roads in await.



Gossip is a time-filling voodoo that uses words for pins.



The goose that lays the golden eggs gets taken out to lunch a lot.



Godspeed can leave devilish messes.



Cute twice, cliché forever.



The young collect stamps; the old collect doctors.



To impose a creed by force
is as lame as a three-legged horse.



Not to judge is good judgment.



Honesty costs only one ego.



Nothing matters, and so does everything.



The impossible is just around the corner.



Compassion may bloom beautifully out of hatred's rot.



Among the laziest are some of the busiest.



Freedom, to the aimless, may seem a jail.



"Embracing change" is a shibboleth that management commonly uses to lubricate a shaft.



If it isn't cycles, it's waves.



Killing a killer? Do the math.



A dewdrop on one blade of grass makes oceans moot.



Never let a confident person fold your parachute.



Anybody who thinks you walk on water, later won't.



Opportunity knocks, but the inevitable just comes on in.



As a person grows older, time gradually resolves into space.



You can give more than you have, but you can't take more than there is.



The kindest way to make chicken soup is to leave out the chicken.



A yacht is a cheap substitute for walking on water.



Cooking is 90% inspiration and 10% indigestion.



I cried because I had no shoes until I saw a society lady who had no fête.



Killing is a decidedly one-sided pleasure.



During election year a national flatulence sets in.



Opinion is wisdom in diapers.



Freedom allows you to choose which cage to live in.



Laziness is the mother of flurry.



Blunders create as many opportunities as does brilliance.



When you work for yourself, both of you work.



To be President is human; to be humble, divine.



Those on the take give up what those on the give take out.



Over time, pleasure and pain go together like tick and tock.



Perhaps God didn't actually create the world but won it in a game of marbles, and is now turning His profit.



When stocks were low,
I didn't buy.
When stocks soared high,
my gain was slow.
With stocks now low,
my eyes are dry.



The larger the city, the shorter the tempers.



People remember your generosity far longer than your accumulation.



If roses are art,
then thorns are critics.
The soft choose heart;
the hard, analytics.



Growing old means throwing all abandon to the winds.



Evil is kinetic stupidity.



Precious stones iridesce; precious people irritate.



Both love and wile
can makes lips smile.
To know a liar,
look up higher.



American Business Ethic:

Our number one priority is customer satisfaction--
except where achieving this might erode profits.



You are not what you do, but what you do anyway.



The meek shall inherit the earth--as long as this is really okay
and like everybody's done with it and everything.



You can't kid hate.



Each new day creates itself from available chaos.



Wouldn't opinions be wonderful if nobody else had any?



If you're pulled along by tomorrow, today may seem quite puny,
but if you breathe the essence of today, tomorrow disappears.



When a man's thinking is airtight, his mouth usually leaks.



After Cupid

To love just right
without a fight
is tricky, quite.



When you're reading a book about Zen, you're not reading a book about Zen.



You get the most free financial advice from people who are in your pocket.



Carry your enthusiasm and it carries you.



When you hurt badly enough, almost anyone can be your teacher.



Old programmers never die--they just become legacy.



Gifts given give gifts.



Competition feeds the outer person, while cooperation feeds the inner.



The wall that protects you also confines you.



The root cause of humanity's dramatic progress during the twentieth century may be coffee.



Your bad habits will kill you if bad luck doesn't get you first.



To find eternity, lift up the minute.



Like milestones on a journey, our mistakes show us right where we are.



We age in years, but we mature in moments.



Uterior motives may be invisible, but oh, the smell.



The small angers the small.



Even perfection has its limitations. For example, a perfect square can hardly roll.



The slogan "Time is money" has encouraged Americans to spend
as much time chasing money as money saving time,
creating a high standard of frazzle.



Scrooge no longer hates Christmas, now that he's acquired it.



Tomorrow holds rewards
for thoughtfulness today

distilled from painful errors
in endless yesterday.



The mind discovers buttons that the heart refrains from pushing.



In an important business meeting there will typically be more faces than people.



Many newcomers in hell are soon put to work designing phone menus.



A New Beatitude

Blessed are the shrinks
who'll listen to you hollah
for just a hundred dollah
when life completely stinks.



Progress entails thinking outside of the box to create fresh boxes
for the unimaginative to think inside of.



Our enemies teach us lessons that our admirers never can.



In a university you can have a bad idea without endangering the general public.



America has quietly fallen into the hands of those who drive over the speed limit.



If unpaid overtime isn't slavery, it's certainly funny money.



Future historians may note that during the twentieth century,
idolatry was almost completely replaced by idollaratry.



For the endless commitments we make, our days contain too few infinities.



A quarter for expertise buys a dollar's worth of peace.



As Santa comes down the spine from the head to the heart, everything seems a gift.



Does the Star of Bethlehem not shine from every eye?



To refuse free goods and sold enlightenment can prevent a lot of complications.



A car gets you there--beyond which, it's metal clothing.



What if they gave a peace and nobody relaxed?



Quiet is to noise as silence is to quiet.



A school without soul is a busy-box.



Negotiating with a car salesman feels like playing a game of poker blindfolded.



Two invisible antagonists animate nearly every board meeting.
They are quality and quantity.



After all that some of us have been through, hell should be a breeze.



"Financial independence" and "knowing truth"
have been two of the 20th century's most sacred oxymorons.



Earth is unsure footing
and wealth is insecure,
but how you've loved and given
will deathlessly endure.



Those who choose bravely learn deeply.



The spiritual path is lined with many discarded carrots and sticks.



Most modern battles have been lost quietly at night in front of an open refrigerator.



How can we be sure that infinity is all there?



Some music critics will tell you when the meadowlark is out of tune.



Wherever there's new ointment, can a fly be far away?



A sure way to learn is by ignoring good advice.



Each ballot is a bullet unshot.



When the irresistible meets the immovable, a telephone rings somewhere.



But for your past calamities, your virtues might be fewer.



Where would a poet be without an angst to grind?



Can a fountain be robbed?



Saying "no" strengthens; saying "yes" creates.



Poetry works best when you ignore the words.



So many the important, so few the awake.



Dogs and politicians bark until fed or elected.



We are most strengthened, over time, by our weaknesses.



Judge not, and you're dead.



After 50, the best thing about a birthday is having it.



Anything you hide is perfectly safe until found.



The flirt and the flatterer make a cozy couple--for a while.



Well-timed silence is the purest speech.



Everyone, even vegetarians, can benefit by occasionally eating crow.



Their relationship has matured to the point where they don't need each other at all.



Music is better than no silence at all.



When it is time to cry, you do. No volcano is more irresistible than a sobbing whose time has come.



Drinking from deep springs won't make you deep, but digging may.



Unity is the safety net forever beneath twonity.



The palate can murder the colon.



Fate remains wonderfully poised when gamblers tempt it.



When an error is made, the stupid blame,
the conventional cluck, and the awake learn.



For deepest meditation, nothing is necessary--very necessary.



Human motives are so complex that a judge can only be a poet of justice.



In a nutshell, be a nut.



Cyberia: where you live if a good e-mail friend cuts you off.



Even more loathsome than pious condemnation is pious forgiveness.



Even with its hassles, life seems to be the best thing they've come up with yet.



Art and money sleep in twin beds.



Treasures

For years he schemed for money,
the focus of each day.
Now bankers have his money
and he is gone away.



Most knowledge is just belief wearing a top hat.



At the end of a day, is there one less day in your life or one more day in your life?



Intolerance leads to suffering leads to investigation leads to compassion.



Brilliance uses fine words; character, pauses.



There's nothing like a prototype to give the
impression that there's a bandwagon to jump onto,
even when there's only a star and a hitch.



Buy now, and forever comes free.



Any three shark lawyers know at all times which three of them are lying.



Why do some people postulate a female God
but avoid granting the same favor to the devil?



Do: a verb sprinkled liberally into airline announcements
to create the illusion of intense caring.



Visualization can be important to one's advancement in a large company,
especially the ability to see clothing on naked emperors.



As surely as a bud, given water, will become a flower,
the office sycophant, given power, will become an autocrat.



You may wish on a star, but you get what you are.



One inevitable can overturn thousands of impossibles.



The intelligent are wary of the smart.



Moment: an infinitely expandable unit of time, used often in situations of love or airline delays.



Pain doesn't enjoy us, either, but it's got a job to do.



"You have mastered it, my disciple. Next week we will explore the sound of one hand NOT clapping."



If a cat could speak, it probably wouldn't.



Every person we meet is both a wonderland and a curriculum.



To know who you are, observe what you do.



Taste makes waist.



A suture in time saves the future.



A guru said to his gathered disciples: "There are two kinds of people:
those who don't know, and those who don't know that they don't know."
A disciple asked, "How do you know?"



School board meeting: a process whereby difficult problems
are brought up, discussed with opinionated bewilderment, tabled,
and later solved by the school secretary.



The first shall be last and the last shall be first,
while the mass in the middle opine.



Definitions are the main tinker-toys supporting any civilization.



The town's gun factory stands not far from a church,
both making the world a little holier.



At the end of a meadowlark song, the silence is double.



Someone's big ego and a dead rat in the wall are about equally difficult to ignore.



Business office survivors learn to distinguish bluster
from need, and anxiety from importance.



Months come disguised as days, and swindle us sweetly of years.



We depend upon each other for our independence.



Undone tasks quickly have children and grandchildren.



There's nothing new
beneath the sun,
but luckily,
what's old is fun.



Be glad if your age is still approaching your IQ and not leaving it behind.



Time is all we have, and most of what we don't have.



For a variety of reasons, every Christmas the uninformed
buy the unnecessary for the ungrateful.



Crying makes an inner rainbow.



To find big mistakes, look for big egos.



You can't buy a home any more than you can feel at home.



Everyone contributes to society--some by serving as horrible examples.



We learn so much from some of our mistakes that we keep on repeating them.



Guilt is a little prison that keeps you out of big ones.

Darkness

What could be so dark
as lying awake at night
dreading the next day?

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Death Is Life Bursting into Bloom

When I die, I will not die.
I will be a foot coming out of a too-small shoe,
a bird flying free out of a cramping cage,
an astronaut taking off his space suit,
having safely returned home.

When you die, you will not die either.
You are not your body, as I'm not mine.
You will see a brighter rainbow
and hear heaven's ethereal music
which no stereo can capture.

When I die but not die,
I will leave a little part of me
inside your memory.
It will be your key to my door
that is always open in heaven.

When you die but not die,
I will have the key to your door too.
Better to have keys for open doors
than closed doors without keys,
as in this locked-up life on earth.

When I am gone but not gone,
think of me and I am there.
When you are gone but not gone,
I will send you flowers through the air.
Let us celebrate the magnificent safety of death.

Death through a Peephole

How can I word it?

I am 45, on the
downhill side of life.
Lying on the couch,
eyes closed,
my stereo playing Bach's
St. Matthew Passion,
I see death
through an inner peephole--
a visionless glimpse.

There it is,
a threatless,
benevolent space,
neither outer nor inner,
where neither moon nor
Andromeda move.

I feel the grip of a subsonic
bass note in my chest,
a whole note from
the bottom of the cosmos.

Death? Is that you?
A beautiful black
emptiness full
of friendly steadiness?

Yes, comes no answer.

I look up at the ceiling
and smile at 46.

Deep Coffee, Alone

Suburbs (proud arks upon a primitive sea)
leak.

Today a female heart has gone funny--
funny like the strangest way a heart can feel
and still beat.

Quiet on her white couch,
drinking gourmet coffee,
she wrestles with inner intrusions
not covered by her insurance--
uninvited bass notes
are troubling her treble reality.

All is in place outdoors--
sunshine properly warming her acre,
fertile lawn greenly framing
her sporty car aglitter in the driveway,
white patio furniture gleaming
from acceptably jaunty angles.

But indoors, wallpaper blurs near the couch.
She cries--longly, profoundly cries.

Her architected home has no ears
for such snappings of heart,
nor is her healthy lawn
in sympathy wilting.

Her white couch, red car, green lawn,
and petite palace of prepared comfort
seem like checkers, smart but alien
on a board whose game has fallen
deep into chess for keeps.

Coffee and courage by now cool,
she meekly questions the silence:
"What is happening to me?"

Body, calm.
Mind, thoughtless.
Heart, electric.
Silence, holy.

(Cup needs rinsing.)

Dilemma

Yes, no--
every day deeper--
this, that--
maybe--
no, not.

Grinding of the gods
peels away raw chaff
from bleeding grain,
daydream by nightmare,
week by moment.

Heartbeats nor breathing
repair this rift that
tumult has torn
between two rights
that are both wrong.

Struggle nor simmer
brings any glimmer
of release.

The breath continues,
but the blood
grows thicker.

Yes, no--
it is not given to know,
but to go forward--
or just go.

Divine Mischief

If Oneness, why Twoness?
Is the One a relief for the Two,
and is the Two an excitement for the One?
A brush against the Divine Cheek?

Perfect Oneness rains polarity
down into physical creation and conflict--
but later, Twoness sublimely surrenders
back into the One Breath.

Can there be some mischief here?
Might the Two be the One's TV?

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Divine Priorities

Why build the Church cathedrals?
Just pile up grains of sand
if you've a mind to do some thing
to occupy your hand.

Why dress up for the service?
Why serve the holy stuff
in gold and silver chalices?
An old tin cup's enough.

If quality's in rareness,
as silver's hard to find,
how great then must be humble folks
who've cleared doubt from their mind.

If every brick in every church
were mortared end to end,
that row would never leave the earth,
but we could still pretend.

If God wants us to dress up,
let's save fine clothes until
the day we give this □□ place up,
then in them lie quite still.

But if God does want cathedrals,
let's hurry and get more made.
Let's build them fine, but keep in mind
the inner ones, homemade.

Divinity

This air is thin
but You are in it,
in my lungs
in my blood
in my being
in my house.

In this picture
on the wall
of a red tulip
You are cupped
within the flower
within the picture
within the frame
within my eyes
behind my eyes.

You read through my reading,
feel through my feeling,
flow through my flowing,
beat through the beating
of my heart which You own.

In the silence
I hear nothing
but You
if I but listen.
Nothing needs to be heard,
and the You in nothing
especially needs to be heard.

You in me
and I in You
are sufficient
for the now.

Doing What One Can Do

Mostly the world thumps as it revolves,
like a tire about to blow out bigtime.
Some little place on earth has an owie
that nobody will kiss, an owie that throbs and stinks.
Will someone please kiss the latest wars?
Just a couple of smackers to make them feel better?

Would you, YOU, kiss something that rancid?
Or will you just ride along in your body,
reading your newspaper and saying "I'll be darned"?

This world needs a gigantic, resounding kiss
that will echo down the centuries as the turning point
at which mankind dropped its murderous mind
and gave and loved and gave and loved some more.

My lips are pursed to give this kiss, but where
should it be administered?
Where is the world, indeed?
Where is mankind?
These easy questions are as profound as Zen.

My heart wells up with unconditional love
to heal and cure and save and mend,
but there's no world to kiss, no mankind.
Ignorant of my good intentions and holy purpose,
the world goes on thumping like a terrible tire while
I and a million other do-gooders fail to kiss its lump.

"Let the world be the lopsided world," my head whispers to me.
"The world chooses perfectly what is needed for its growth,
and so do all the people who are in the world."

But letting what is be what is is too wrenching for my heart.
Call me whatever you wish--
I now plant this giant smacker in the air
so that Earth and I may groove aright among the silences.

Dollar Dazzle

The New York Times, Nov. 9, 1998:

It has been almost a year since Egghead Software, a fallen leader in software retailing, announced that it would close the last 80 of its stores to begin anew as an Internet-only operation. Now the company says it is ready to start over -- again.

The New York Times, Aug. 16, 2001:

Egghead.com filed a Chapter 11 petition late today, according to a docket sheet in United States Bankruptcy Court in San Francisco. The company also dismissed 200 employees.

Where have all the Eggheads gone?
Like yesterday's air--to the winds.
I knew their store in Chicago
on Dearborn
near the First National Bank
(which where has also gone?),
knew it as well as my family room.
The clerks there were hard to find
and mostly smart-alecky quick
when asked a question.
Brightly-inked, their software boxes
shouted "Buy me" at browsing retinas.
The unquiet phone by the register
preempted not-so-patient lines of
customers holding plastic gold.
Store policies bristled with
selfishness behind an ostensible
wish to please and a logoic egg.
Where did all their profits go?

I think all the Eggheads have gone
where all the CompUSAs are going,
and all the Dells and the Gateways,
each company captive in a summary
spreadsheet managed by some
moneymen's mind who will someday
wave his magic tongue and say
"No more."
Then employees' families
will crumble and groan,
receiving dread notice
oh so once again.
Grandiose
is Mr. American Moneyman
in his plans, ruthless
in his recklessness, stonehearted
in his layoffs.

Yes, Eggheads have all gone
where yesterday's air is now,

but on and on proceeds
the fiscal mayhem like a rodeo,
each new company out of the gate
a strong bronco that few CEO's
can ride but any can sell off
or shoot dead.

Strip away the dollar signs
and what remains but ego?
Mightn't we just agree
on having a decade or two
of calm cooperation?
After all, we do have us,
right here, this moment.
We're a complex bunch,
but we each
came equipped with
yes, a heart--
oh my but yes,
a heart.

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Door

At the far end
of this sun-dappled,
wisteria-draped courtyard
I see a Romanesque
wooden door, slightly open,
revealing light from behind.

This courtyard is a lovely place
but the door invites me further.
Do I dare approach this portal
and open it? Walk through?
Will my future change?
Why am I so beckoned?

I push open the door and enter.

Two attendants lead me
directly to an oaken podium
set before a large audience
of robed men and women.
I am asked to give a speech.

Quietly I say to everyone:
"A speech I cannot give,
kind friends. There was
an outer door I saw ajar,
and I came boldly through,
but I am no one
you would listen to."

The same attendants
help me don a robe,
then lead me to a chair
among the listeners.

We all sit and wait.

Dove

Dove rides windy wire,
placid in tumult, slim tail
flipping up and down.

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Dove Missile

This afternoon in a chapel
in the desert mountains
northwest of Tucson
I was standing beside
a large plate glass window
admiring the landscape
when a dove flew toward me
at top speed not seeing
the window as a window

The silent chapel boomed
and the dove fell down
still resilient enough
to limp and flutter over
behind some vegetation

When doves become
missiles guided by illusion
they seem little different
from the murderous hawk

Down, Down in the Tao

A Grand Unnameable
inaudibly speaks
from endless here,
else could speak we not
nor be.

Feathers, we,
on a deep bird
unseen between
two night skies,
flying because
feathers can.

Listening are we, with
our universe held to one ear,
to keeps-playing scuffles
between Isn't and Is, boisterous
in their muffled playroom.

To dance is the rule
in our This-That school
excepting that sleep
too is a rule
and quite more deep.

End of the world?
Peace after that?
Perhaps--but from within
the Night of All Nights
some eventually tickled
divine sleeper may
dreamingly laugh aloud,
stirring breathing into the mist--
and back soon will be we,
guns, and daily newspapers.

Call this if you wish
"The Little Laugh Theory"
although nameable is the Is
no more than is the Isn't,
down, down in the Tao.

Dream

The universe turns
over in its sleep and dreams
a trillion "big bangs."

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Dressed

At birth
my mother
dressed me
in the world

which I have worn
ever since
despite some
fraying sleeves
and tight belts

that I can
deal with
until the main
button pops

and off of me
the world falls
in a useless
heap.

Drifting

Floating on this inner river

Surface always supporting

Not needing oars or rudder

Inward becoming onward

Glancing against soft bank

Returning now to center

Moving always forward

Assuming no destination

No one giving guidance

Fragrance wafting in

Effects unveiling causes

Shadows weaving slowly

Friends seen floating by

Saluting and passing on

Permanence giving way

Memories all smoothing

Keeping in and keeping on

Down merging with up

Dreaming hidden ocean

Dudely May

Y'know, I'm into these lilac scents
And the birds that chirp and sing
Before the dawn in trees near the fence--
It's a totally awesome thing.

My vibes become, like, optimum
When the May air stirs my pad--
I'm clueless where that rush comes from
But it's totally, totally rad.

I groove with the falling of way cool rain,
And I dig (oh, wow!) the space
Of, like, thunderstorms (they fry my brain)
With subwoofer-quality bass.

Since the Dude laid down this happenin' season,
I'm thinkin' He must have meant it,
And if May should croak for any reason,
We'd have to, like, reinvent it.

Easter Wish

happy so very
Easter
from under when
beyond where
through bluest maybe
above cloudy ago

in loving
quiets of
with

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How westbound engineers saw Earlville, Illinois in 1999

Echoes of Earlville

When someone first revealed to me
that I lived in Earlville, Illinois,
I had no inkling there was ever
any other place to live.
Show me another town where trains
would wail from creek to crossover,
glissando-ing like slide trombones.

I remember winter nights in bed
when long steam-engine whistle toots
would bring about deep slumbering--
reliable as lullabies.
Soon progress dared to usher in
the brassy, strident dissonance
of diesel horns, "long-long-short-long,"
which set the window panes a-buzz.

Percussion also spread through town
from near the Farmer's Elevator--
during harvest rush, staccato
pops from John Deeres lined up near
the scales sent complex polyrhythms
further east than the Legion Hall.

Earlville was small, so most knew most--
for everybody's good, it seemed.
Few homes were listed, bought, or sold
without a buzz of estimates
proceeding through the telephones.
Transgression stories relayed at
the noisy downtown coffee shop
made patrons want just one more cup--
and filled the owner's till enough
to pay the waitress and the cook.

In Earlville, peaceful though it was,
occasional embarrassments
were held quite close to home and hearth.
Shrewd townsfolk having secrets knew
the power that perfect silence has,
so that even at the coffee shop
no mortal ever was the wiser.

I wonder whether Earlville now
is still the way it used to be.
Are the same things happening today
except to different residents?
Do trains still pound those west-end switches,
filling town with jazzy rhythms?
Do policemen cruise the streets at night
and watch for tavern stragglers
who think booze helps their driving skills?

The Leader prints the deaths of friends
I used to work and joke beside,
their laughter now a memory.
Obituaries fail to tell
the grief and joy these townsfolk knew.
If Roman Catholic, they find
eternal rest on holy ground
off Union Street just east of town.
For Protestants and "faith unknown"
the Precinct is the plot of choice,
out by the blacktop south of town.
I'll join my townsmen there someday
when hidden forces that I trust
decide it's time I go back home.

Although I can't be sure I'll hear
those trains at night from where I rest,
the living folks will surely hear
them on and off between their dreams.
As each nocturnal freight train bawls
through town, then fades out west or east,
light-sleeping heirs to Earlville's past
will pull their covers up a bit,
turn over, and go back to sleep.

Echoes of Earlville

When someone first revealed to me that I lived in Earlville, Illinois, I had no inkling there was ever any other place to live. Show me another town where trains would wail from creek to crossover, glissando-ing like slide trombones.

I remember winter nights in bed when long steam-engine whistle toots would bring about deep slumbering--reliable as lullabies. Soon progress dared to usher in the brassy, strident dissonance of diesel horns, "long-long-short-long," which set the window panes a-buzz.

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Earlville was small, so most knew most--for everybody's good, it seemed. Few homes were listed, bought, or sold without a buzz of estimates proceeding through the telephones. Transgression stories relayed at the noisy downtown coffee shop made patrons want just one more cup--and filled the owner's till enough to pay the waitress and the cook.

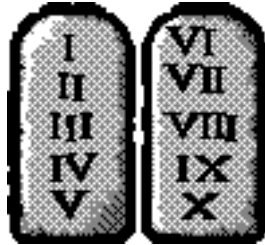
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The Leader prints the deaths of friends I used to work and joke beside, their laughter now a memory. Obituaries fail to tell the grief and joy these townsfolk knew. If Roman Catholic, they find eternal rest on holy ground off Union Street just east of town. For Protestants and "faith unknown" the Precinct is the plot of choice, out by the blacktop south of town. I'll join my townsmen there someday when hidden forces that I trust decide it's time I go back home.

Although I can't be sure I'll hear those trains at night from where I rest, the living folks will surely hear them on and off between their dreams. As each nocturnal freight train bawls through town, then fades out west or east, light-sleeping heirs to Earlville's past will pull their covers up a bit, turn over, and go back to sleep.

Echoes of the Decalogue



Poetic Commentaries on the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17)

**by Alan Harris
1990**

Preface

The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, were written down by Moses thousands of years ago and recorded for humanity in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, verses 1-17. I have interpreted them poetically here in an attempt not only to bring alive their literal meanings with imagery, but also to pick up some of the wisdom and beauty latent in a seemingly austere code of conduct.

The Ten Commandments are timeless guides for living in time. They help us to avoid stress-causing actions. They encourage us to transcend our selfish desires. They focus our minds on what is right and good. Intelligently followed, they engender love and growth, steering us away from blunders which might later bounce back upon us as pain or illness.

If we are observant, we notice a law of cause and effect at work in our lives. Unselfish actions and constructive speech generally return dividends of health and happiness, whereas our selfish actions and destructive words lead us inexorably toward discomfort and suffering. We reap what we sow. The Ten

Commandments help us cut down the weeds in our daily lives and sow fruitful seeds for the future.

Life on earth has been called a school for souls. Those who know and observe the rules are quickest to pass on to the next class. Human beings, however, are always free to choose their own path. There would otherwise be no need for the aid provided by the Ten Commandments. Freedom's great blessing is that we can begin improving our own destiny any time we choose. We are the slaves of our past, yes, but we are equally the masters of our future. What could be more fair?

First Commandment

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no others gods before me.

Cleave to none but the One.

The Many will court you,
lure you into their shrines
set up to Power,
to Wealth,
to Fame,
to Security,
and bid you worship there
and lay down your life.

Beware of the Many,
for they are always without,
while the One is always within.
Understand the undersound of the One
before heeding any outer speeches.
The One speaks with thundering silence
in the heart of your heart.
Authority devoid of the One
is no authority at all.

The One in you,
you in the One,
is All.

Second Commandment

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them....

Follow an idol
and you will discover
the taste of sand.

Powerful pullings there are
from praise-beggars
who give trinkets in return
for adulation.
Exciting are the fantasies
of the mind through which masterful
spinners of words invite
allegiance and wealth transfer.

But the mightiest guide
is the most invisible,
the most inner and still,
the most subtle and sublime.

Murmurings of holy power
are here and now and always,
not in the cunning phrases of phonies,
not in the glittery glamor of idols,
but in a quiet breeze of the brain
that sways you gently toward your
fellow men and women
as brothers and sisters
in our Cosmos.

Let all the idols chatter and clatter,
for they know nothing of the
One Grand Architect
Whose love dissolves
the graven images of pretenders
and Whose flowing word
silences all advertisements
for self and greedy gain.

Look through, not to, the idol.

Third Commandment

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

The Name of Names
is What Was,
What Is,
and What Shall Be.
Who but a thimblebrain
would arrogate that Name
to his own lust,
his own anger,
his own power over others,
his own slanderous speech?

The Name of Names
is a fountain of peace,
a strength in the heart.
Pervert that Name
for self-gain or show,
for pyrotechnic cursing
of the twiddling tongue,
and ultimately you will feel
nagging loneliness
when you cannot call on that Name
for succor in some desert.

The Name of Names
speaks itself in every instant,
billions of times in every light wave--
but usurp the Name of Names
for flippancy or anger,
and your light will gradually fade
until you babble in the darkness.

Fourth Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The seventh day is holy--
is when you wrap up the stress of six
and throw it all into an inner abyss--
is when you richly resonate
with the lessons of the week--
is when you pack your soul's lunch
for the next week.

To ignore the seventh day
and keep your work going
on and on
is an attachment to flutter
that will tear you
nerve from nerve
over years.

A little nap is good
on the seventh day,
a hug or two,
a game.

On the seventh day your heart
can launch a loving arrow
across the next six days
to penetrate and renew
your same heart
older by a week and softer.

Remember the seventh day
not as a burden but as a blooming,
not as a prohibition but as a permission.

All seven days are holy to be sure,
but on the seventh comes a celestial smile
that only stillness may see and feel.

Fifth Commandment

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Father and Mother are One.
You were always with Them,
and They with you.

Never were you not,
nor ever will you not be,
so long as your Father and Mother
are alive in the heavens.

Flowing humbly like water
into all the cracks of Creation,
your Heavenly Mother speaks to you
gently through your inner ear.

Your Heavenly Father
penetrates your soul
with His primal power
to further your growth,
spark from His Flame
that you are.

Honoring your Father and Mother
is to speak the Holy Language
which no book nor Bible
can fully reveal.

The Heavenly Couple,
the Yin and Yang,
make up the Holy One.
Your earthly parents
are a living reflection
of this Heavenly Union
which nourishes you,
allowing your awareness
to mellow and deepen.

Sixth Commandment

Thou shalt not kill.

Do not kill.
There are a thousand
reasons to kill,
and only one not to.

What is that reason?
Read it in a cow's gentle eyes.
Hear it in a rooster's crowing at dawn.
Feel it in the handshake
of a so-called enemy soldier.

The killing knife
pierces the center
of your own heart.

Seventh Commandment

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Love's pure waters
may not with impunity be poured
into a muddy stream.
The sanctity of the committed Two
in harmonious devotion
has the blessing of the One.

Adultery lurks in a mental alley,
holding up colored pictures of bliss
before your inner eye
and inviting you to walk on in.
You walk only into illusion,
a present pleasure
hiding a future pain.

Corrupt the Two,
and smirky demons
will buzz your thoughts
like flies around dung.

Purity, purity, purity.

Eighth Commandment

Thou shalt not steal.

To take what belongs to another
is to feast on poison.

While Everything belongs to Everyone,
not everything belongs to you.

Looking outward, you see
flashy trinketry and tempting affluence
flaunted by those who have and have.
You lust to take it, to surround it, to own it,
to finally be happy and free.

But looking inward to the Source,
you can see that
you have all anyone needs
from the Fountain of the Infinite.

Burst open then with giving,
and theft will become absurd.

Ninth Commandment

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

A lie is like a fingernail
screeching across a blackboard.
It jangles your mind,
perverts your heart,
and sickens your body.

To lie is to build
an ugly, frail structure
which to maintain will require
more and more deceit until,
when you no longer remember
the first lie that laid
its flimsy foundation,
the edifice must topple
and come crashing down
upon your head.

To lie is to slice yourself away
from the Eternal Source.
Each lie says,
"I am more important
than WHAT IS."
But tongues that lie
are tongues that taste
the dirt of doom,
for WHAT IS
cannot be altered a whit
by either false words
or false silence.

Those who speak truth
will prevail,
while liars will lie--
lie whimpering
in the cosmic gutters.

Tenth Commandment

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Your neighbor's grass
across the fence looks oh, so green,
much greener than yours.
But the illusion lies in the fence,
not in the grass.
You **are** your neighbor
and your neighbor is you.
These fences, whether of skin
or legal documents
or wire mesh,
are made up entirely
of separative thought.

How can you love your neighbor
while coveting his possessions?
In your envy you wish to shatter
the whole universe into fragments
in hopes of picking up
a few of your neighbor's toys
in the confusion.

Wanting hungrily through fences
burns out your mind.
Envy grows like a green worm
eating away at your heart.

Arise from envy,
tear down the silly fence
which has no reality anyway,
and give your neighbor
the gift of unimpeded friendship.

Then both of you will have
more than everything--
you will share Unity.

Effort

Try to force a flower,
and what do you have?
A mutilated bud.

Try to be happy,
and very existence becomes
trying.

Try to live long
by running and jumping,
eating by the book,
sleeping wisely,

and die truly old
in a nursing home
beside a pot
of plastic flowers.

Electric Heart

Wherein does the heart
get its authority
to pick up the mind
and take it for a rolling ride
through a countryside
of gallant impossibilities?

My heart has leapt me
to a moon for no more reason
than it had to, on the chance
a fireman's net would be
back on earth to catch me.

My heart, no longer
trifling with blood,
pumps pure electricity
because I merely
breathed for eight months
the crackling of
someone's lightning mind,
now gone.

Nothing is left me but to thunder
and wait for the ozone to clear.

English Teacher Unbound

Dickinson. Frost. Eliot.
Wonderful vetted poets--
but sameness of names
in every school.
My students are alive--
they need MEANING,
not biography-worship.

Bless Keats and
jolly Shakespeare
for all they wrote--
but now let's dare
to anonymize these
bards around whom
schools have
mummified their
curricula by means
of committee after
workgroup
kowtowing to
conformist after
department head
after principal as
the decades ditto on.

I'd rather pluck
new writings out of
most abundant
everywhere,
throw them all
nameless into
a vibrant pile,
then pull them up
one by three--
READ them--
BE them--
poems and stories
written by unknowns
who may inspire
and kindle fire.

I fully CARE,
but I'm captive
in this well-lit,
firmly-administered,
climate-controlled
classtomb.

SOULS come here,
parched souls.
We're to feed them
stacks of
cardboard facts
and poetic forms
to memorize--
vital to know,
we con, because
they'll be on
the final exam.

Teachers, let us
wake very much up!
Dare we transcend
the tried and dead?

Let's each write a sonnet
on why we don't read
sonnets--or an elegy
for the deceased
meanings of passion.

What would Shakespeare
write about our schools?
"Much Ado about Atrophy"?
And Robert Frost?
"The Railroad Not Taken"?

I am nobody
to be writing like this,
nor am I in your syllabus,
but I can still breathe.

Enlightenment

A vibrating soul
Sends up a tentative tentacle
And feels the Divine Touch.

The trinity of clay,
Body and heart and mind,
Joins the Trinity of Spirit,
Will and Wisdom and Soul,
As the one knowing the One.

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An Evening Question

Blackbirds crackle random
sonic pepper under fading skies
at end of day when silence
brings more pain to birds
than sounds held in can bear.

Up west, three backlit
afterclouds, blue-gray,
suggest a breathless blessing,
outer sky to inner eye.

Two robins try antiphony
positioned fence to fence
and trade their choruses
across a subtlety of dew.

Overhead, a helicopter's growl
subdues the singing birds
who observe a silent minute
waiting for the bully to be gone.

Next door, the dog
barks out his being
at something heard or felt
and with each bark
a girl shouts "Shut up!"
until he does.

A cat comes walking by,
surprised at me,
too close,
but quickly taking care
to show no fear.

Quietly alert,
I stare across
this outdoor table--
top all strewn with
wings of maple seeds
delayed from
reaching earth--
and I bow within.

My breath amazed
at simple dusk,
I fold in half,
and half, and half,
until there's hardly any I.

This enigmatic sky
now closing day
with fake finality
while straddling
yin and yang
abstains from answering
my wordless
evening question.

Every Christmas

Every Christmas never dawned but
as pulses beating in a caring heart.

Every star was never less than holy
leading the wise to kings newborn.

Every mother always gave to earth
a child who never declined her love.

Every child was nearer than breath
before its birth made glad all stars.

Every angel never less than gave a
blessing to all babies new on earth.

Every true gift was never not given
from open hands into grateful need.

Every unseen world is now unsilent
as it rings with timely songs of joy.

Excuse Me, God

Excuse me, God,
I didn't see you there.
To my nearsighted eyes
you looked like air.

You cleared your throat
with jarring thunderbolt,
but I heard nothing deep,
just felt a jolt.

I built my house
with quite a clever plan,
but didn't see the sign
that said, "God's land."

I walked through woods
and thought the cool smell
was only natural,
from trees that fell.

I thought it quaint,
the orange western stain;
I thought it nice that clouds
wrung out their rain.

I saw the stars
through shallow telescope,
and saw eternity
as just a hope.

I meant no harm--
I had my glasses off;
so next time, if I'm near,
please cough.

Experts and Folk

Oh whilliker thistledown, angel-may-care
if the pins of all dumbledom fly through the air
and tinkle quite prinkly with scatter and scorn--
who am I, I ask you, and how was I born?

Universe, schmuniverse, big bang or no,
let comets be vomits lit up as they go;
let galaxies stretch till they reach golly gee,
but where was I, why am I, who will I be?

Theological thinkers and scholarly fakes
pretend with Godthority, footnotes, and spakes,
assuring, demurring to cover their gap,
but all they produce is implausible crap.

Oh wiffle-ball shuffle-through, devil-be-joke,
instead of the experts, I'll hang with the folk
who don't know from nothin' how we became we
but never were not and will never not be.

Falls Visitor

A hundred feet from
Niagara's Horseshoe Falls
hurtling blindly down
with groaning gravitation

stood the antebuilding all
a-color inside, and a-glitz
with trinkets and toys
crafted in worldwide shacks.

Chattering T-shirted tourists,
sporting transparent rainsuits
and chewing chewing gum,
made ready for their big wows.

Cheep! from suddenly ceilingward
descended the speech of a sparrow
trapped in this house of gee whiz--
divinity by surprise.

Farmer Karma

I was a boy farmer
because I had to be
because my father
was a man farmer
and all my granddads
back to almost Adam
had been boy farmers
and man farmers
and that was that.
I hardly even realized
that I hated farming
but just did it because
and forever because.

I learned how to
sharpen a hoe
and cut through my
hot-day reluctance
in order to kill Canadian
thistles in mechanical
planticide. Dad told
me that the county
thistle warden might
assess us a fine if we
had too many thistles.
Chop, chop, chop,
I spiraled into each patch
and then on to the next,
never finishing them all.

I learned how to start
the John Deere Model A
tractor by yanking
the top of its flywheel
mightily to the left
with the petcocks open
to reduce compression
until things got to popping
then closing the petcocks
for more power.
That Model A and I were
partners who bounced
across years of bumpy soil
pulling a drag or a disk
or a 3-bottom plow.
High in the bucket seat,
teeth into the gritty air,
I was as much a slave
to the A as it to me,

as much a slave
to the farm
as any farmer is.

I shoveled grain
inside bins where
dust polluted the air
and filled my lungs
so full that
a time or two
I almost died
from asthma.
But dying would be
a slacker's excuse,
and the grain had
to be leveled.

In the haymow
there was also,
guess what,
dust and heat
enough to turn
my lungs into
solid protoplasm--
what bronchial tubes?
When older, I got to stay
outside and throw
the bales onto
the Mayrath hay
elevator and breathe
the same good air that
our cows all breathed.

I was always dutiful.
I never gave Dad
a single hint that
I didn't like farming.
No hint, that is,
other than my stoic
attitude, my yes-boss
obedience, my lack
of any initiative,
and my slipshod work.
These failings didn't matter
because there was the farm
and there were we
and the earth was turning
and the weather was erratic
and new work grew up
as fast as the precious corn.

Dad never tried to teach
me anything technical
about how to farm.
He could see my soul.
One look at me
on any day of any week
told him that this boy
would never be a farmer.
No point in telling the boy
how best to rotate crops
or how to repair a combine
or how to choose fertilizer
or when to sell the grain.
Such breath would
have been as wasted
as a cold March wind
across the railroad field.

Dad was a good farmer
and a good man.
Farming is good, too.
We get to eat from it.
But farming gets glorified
pretty often, and I never
partook of that schmaltz.

I was a tractor driver
who would watch train
after train go by
on the Burlington
and wave at the engineers
and caboosemen,
all of us dutifully chained
to our turning wheels.

I was a manure pitcher
and a manure spreader
who knew the cows had
to produce this but didn't
see my future in it.

Farmer karma was
my inherited destiny
until college days
when I learned how
to be amply engrossed
in motions of the mind
and never later hankered
for any life on any farm.

Father, How Can I Hear You?

A Song of Renewal

Father, Father, how can I hear You?
Why are the clouds so gray?
Why is the wind so cold?
Oh, why are the trees so bare?
Father, Father, how can I hear You?

Father, Father, I pray unto You.
I pray for Your light, but the clouds remain;
I pray for Your warmth, but the cold wind blows on;
I pray for new growth, but the trees are still bare;
Father, Father, I pray unto You.

Father, Father, now I hear Your voice.
Your sun melts away my clouds, and I see Your light;
Your warm breath replaces the freezing wind;
The trees are beginning to bud and flower;
The landscape grows green with Your love.
Father, Father, now I can hear You.

Feathered Ephemera

After I had set up the bird feeder
and filled it with seeds,
the past entered into my lungs
like an old friend in a gray overcoat
coming into the house out of November.

For a few moments
I (not seemed) was an earlier adult,
vibrant with hints and smells,
living younger in this aging body
as forgotten feelings blazed up
in the tangy wind.

Today, sparrows are flitting about the feeder
enjoying seedy morsels that heat them
against crackling winter mornings.

Cheerio, sparrows!
Each wiggly one of you
betokens a forgotten coloration
in the cup of my soul.
Cheerio! Eat your fill
before the neighbor's cat
eats his.

February Dreams

February seeds silently recall all,
As if winter's death were a silky dream,
And the influx of the new sun's warmth
Were the spark and flash of remembrance.

March will bring the quickening sprouts,
April the lush early growth,
May the flowering of procreation--
And then February dreams will fade away.

How many memories must there be
When seeds reclaim their hold on warming soil?
How many seeds are there? How many lives?
In the stillness of my heart I hear: "One."

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Find

Reading an ancient
manuscript I come across
an ancient eyelash.

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Finis

Cloud-layered sunset
intimate yellow-orange
a finch flies over

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Fireplace

By the fireplace tonight
we are helping the fire warm us.
These flames are as old as pain
and as new as tomorrow's journey.

While the logs listen,
we think of stories to tell
that crackle and sizzle
and laugh into the air.
We confess old secrets
and fresh hopes, surprised
at the fire's way with truth.

What warm gift is here?
If fire were aspiration,
would its color differ?
If fire were catharsis,
would it not still crackle?
If fire were love,
would its flames fail to dance?

By the fireplace tonight
we and the flames are one.

Five Definings

Sky:

awfullywhere above,
is ours to
(of course)
share with
(whoever may be)
God.

Earth:

much underrated,
sturdily
(all the same)
holds up
(whatever may be)
the sky.

Heaven:

sky and earth
in a goodly
(feel the flow)
mix holding
(want them in vain)
all unholdables.

Hell:

doorway to
the back
(way back)
stairs leading to
(wherever may be)
heaven.

Friendship:

life sharing
light hearts
(and heavy)
without benefit
(or hindrance)
of shouldness.

A Flower for Manly P. Hall

Unschool'd in universities
yet flowing forth with ancient lore,
he offers glimpses of the One
to help all seekers see within.

He weaves his ample writings
with silver threads and gold
combined with rainbow shades
of steady faith and truth.

His lectures brim with eloquence
without the notes most speakers need.
His seasoned wisdom can be grasped
by any who have ears to hear.

On finding such a mind
as broad and pure as sky
a grateful soul is moved
to offer up this flower.

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Flower in Vase

This budding daffodil contains
A universe in birth:
Each molecule a galaxy,
Each quark a tiny earth.

And what we call our universe,
All matter, time, and space,
May be a single atom of
A macrocosmic vase.

Thus up and down the scale of size
Throughout Infinity,
Both "small" and "large" are limitless
And join Eternity.

Great men have puzzled over God
To place Him in their plan,
As Primal Cause, or Sourceless Source,
Or vast Omniscient Man.

But God can never be confined
Within a man-made phrase;
He hides behind unnumbered veils
Impossible to raise.

And yet we see His evidence
In every time and place--
Behind each seed and universe,
Within each flower and vase.

Inside our inmost soul of souls,
If we can meditate,
We find a spark of light divine
And feel it radiate.

While nowhere, and yet everywhere,
Our God resides within;
Though still and small, His guiding voice
Transcends life's noisy din.

To hear His voice and understand,
Then fearlessly obey,
Is that which mystics, martyrs, saints,
And wise men call "The Way."

Consider every universe
And every point in space
As God in God in God in God,
As vase in flower in vase.

Free

Blurry smog feeds the morning sky gassy gulps as
Germey motorcars scuttle in lines along their causal highways.

Herewearefolksinourtrafficopterhelicopterreportingthe-
latestdevelopmentsinthetrafficconditionAllstreets-
arerunningsmoothlyasofrightnowanditlooksasthough-
thisconditiionwillcontinuefortheremainderof--

The helicopter suddenly
Descends into the mass
Of smog and tin and milling men
And violently cracks open like a transparent egg,
Giving birth to an afterlife or two.

Free.
Free are helicopters.
Free to fly about in untold yards of morning sky.
Free to watch the roads of other men, advise them where to turn.
Free, some, to fall a fast free path to the hardness of the ground.

Free Now

I get up in the morning, and my life is totally, radically free. What do I do? Do I make the bed? Do I take a shower? Do I eat a meal called breakfast? Do I go to work at an office? Do I sell my house and move to another state? Do I give my money to charity and beg? How do I think if I am free? Do I think of myself at all? Do I think of others? Am I just a clear lens which sees, behind which there is no thing, and in front of which is every thing? I am free, but how do I act? What do I do? I am free from how, and from doing, but my heart still beats, I breathe, I must eat, I must eliminate and perspire. Do I feel overwhelmed with freedom and long for the old cages? Do I become depressed because I can find nothing to do? If I see the futility in every human motion and emotion, how can I live? Where is my base of operations? In space? In nothingness? In something called God? In whatever love is? Am I really totally, radically free, or have I just enlarged my cage? Can I find the boundaries of my prison if they are invisible to me? I feel them holding me in. Am I free? Yes, I am free. No more family is necessary. No more society. No more civilization. I can walk out the door and never come back. I can go anywhere on earth. I am completely free. But to go anywhere is to not go everywhere else. I leave a trail. I remember. People remember me. There are ties. Within memory can I be free? Can I remember without encumbrance, without attachment, without hope, without fear? Yes. I am free. I sit on a rock. Where am I? Who am I? Why am I here? Am I free? Yes, totally, radically free. Do I like it? That is not the question. Freedom is all there is, and I am it. Each thin

g matters as much as each other thing, and yet no thing matters. Matterin
g is a trap, but things are just th
ings. I am free to lie in the mud o
r to go to the office or to sit here on th
e rock. What am I to do? Free, as I am,
what is there in life? The cage has
been sprung open and destroyed,
and there is no going back to it. I b
reathe, and I walk, and I stumble, a
nd eat, and see. A man walk
s by and sees me sitting on t
he rock, and he says, "Hello. Nice mornin
g, isn't it?" I say, "Yes, it is." Am I
still free? What is another person, r
eally? Before, I could only assume, bu
t now I must investigate.
What, really, is another person?
I breathe deeply, and I get up and
walk toward nothing, away from nothi
ng, just walk. Now I know what I mus
t do, now that I am radically free. I m
ust find out what the other person is.
He is there. I see him. He is not an illu
sion. Is he free? If not,
can I free him? Am I free no
t to free him? What is relationship when th
ere is freedom? I will investigate until I die.
A bird lands on a fence post.

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Free of Verse

jet lag of the soul

as free as habitual wishes

cosmic popcorn for the mind

brushes my cheek

executives at pomp in the pompground

whisper while you whisk

bless this up until now pagan food that we may remain asleep in holiness

billions of internal collisions today, and the city burps in the dark

help reduce the national debt--buy US Savings Bonds

politician without a tongue, please--rare

wolf and fox a-smile

sweet encrypted mummies

smelling a buxom face

Freedom Grounded

Hypnotized by young freedom,
I chased bedazzling baits of my choice
until pain came crashing through my doors.

Thank you very much, freedom.

And I ate choice foods with delight
until my older arteries became clogged
with a near calamity of consequences.

Freedom, do you need to be fatal?

Computer-enabled, I freely flew commodity
futures like a test pilot, with precision eyes
trained on my instruments--then crashed.

Hello, is anyone there?
Freedom, you truly stink.
Can I at least be free not to be free?

"Serve," says no voice.

Serve? Why serve?

"It works."

Serve without pay?

"With or without pay--but with energy."

No more freedom, then?

"Remembering your former agony
while serving where the need is,
you gain a grounded freedom."

From whom do I hear this?

"From the call without a voice."

Frequently Asked Questions about Christmas

Q: If Santa doesn't have to age, then why has he become old?
A: He only appears to be old. He's an undercover kid.

Q: How can a sleigh possibly fly through the air?
A: If you were being pulled by eight flying reindeer, wouldn't you fly too?

Q: Why do we wish people a "Merry Christmas" instead of a "Happy Christmas"?
A: The two are about the same, but with "Merry Christmas" an extra twinkle is seen in the eyes.

Q: Why is a Christmas tree that has been chopped down called a "live Christmas tree"?
A: It's dead but doesn't know it, and yet it's having the time of its life.

Q: Why do we wrap our Christmas gifts with paper?
A: Because we like to see surprise and joy (real or kindly faked) in the recipients.

Q: How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?
A: Nowadays only four angels can dance there. Formerly there was no limit, but OSHA passed the Angel Safety Law recently, which also requires that the pin must be inspected twice each year for structural defects.

Q: How many gifts can Santa Claus's bag hold?
A: One less than infinity. Why one less? Because there's a limit to everything.

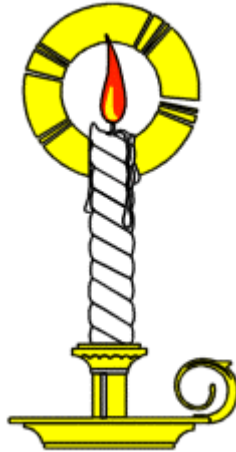
Q: How could a star that is high in the sky lead the Wise Men to a tiny manger on the ground?
A: Wisely, toward the end of their journey they asked directions from someone on the road. Had they not been so wise, they might have missed the manger by several hundred miles. (That person on the road has never been identified.)

Q: Is there really a Mrs. Santa Claus?
A: The best way to know for sure is to ask Santa Claus next time you see him.

Q: Why do we hear so many bells at Christmas time?
A: Because so many people ring them.

Q: Why do so many people ring bells at Christmas time?
A: For the poor, for the joy, and because a bell can say what words can't say.

Q: What can't words say?
A: The moment you wake up on Christmas morning, listen carefully. You may hear then what words can't say.



Friendlight

A Good-Bye Poem

When certain folks
become good friends
a candle lights
and remains aglow

and when these folks
round separate bends
this light stays lit
and will always show.

From Beyond

**Dedicated to the Memory
of Gerald R. Detmers
(1934-1998)**

Floral gatherings
are here tagged
with your sympathetic
signatures,
reprimanding
my hastification
toward the flimsy
hand of freedom
that lifts me
into the underheights.

You may freely glorify
or scorn my memory
now that I have reached
below the neath
and behind the horizon
of hurry.
Burn and urn me
if you will,
but I am far too far
beyond the mold
for any engraved
fanciness to hold.

But let the children
chant their games,
the clouds glide
freely by,
the giant world
pulse free breaths,
for I blend only
back into a whole being
from my little island
of dinky doom.

Be, merely be here with me
as my brief obituation
slides through the air
like a telegram of smiles.

Frozen Fantasy

My first breath outside
on a winter morning
speaks a frosty sentence
and drifts off.

When my hand sticks
to a cold pipe,
I have joined the winter club.

When the sneaky wind
finds a crack in my coat,
I feel the grip
of zero.

Winter is,
if anything,
a surprise in ice.

Gathering

A hush around the dying
lacks nothing for no words--

forgiveness by default,
love river-big,
faltering philosophies,
robbed expectations.

The air inside the air
seems ready to receive.

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Getting Old

A Burlesque

It's awful to get old, it is.
Today I got pretty winded
rocking away in my chair
so I went upstairs for a nap
but tripped over my beard
which is the same color
as the fog before my eyes.

Then I couldn't remember
whether I'd been upstairs
or downstairs, and worse yet,
it didn't seem to matter.

I no longer care whether
there's life after death,
now that life before death
has become so confusing.

Where did I put that drool rag?
I must switch to a new one,
since we're in a new month.

I've missed church services
for several weeks in a row
because they hold them right
in the middle of my night
at 10 a.m. Whenever I do go,
I'm so groggy I can't tell
the Lord's Prayer from
the Lord's Supper, and I'm
apt to get to thinking so deep
that my wife says I breathe
too loud and she nudges me
to break my train of thought.

So this is what it comes to.
When you're a child you
think you'll never get old,
and when you're old, you
forget you were ever a child.

I catch myself rambling
a lot and hope that people
won't notice because maybe
they are nearly as old as I am
or they might be sympathetic
or at least look the other way.

I guess this drool rag's still okay.

Gifts That Stay

A Wedding Poem

How fortune made us meet
we cannot say,
but soon two pairs of feet
will walk the way.

We mirror each to each
the lessons needed
to learn what love may teach
if only heeded.

We give as best we can,
this wedding day,
a woman and a man
as gifts that stay.

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God's Spirit Dwells

God's spirit dwells
in private hells
where broken dreams
cause curdling screams.

Our souls God lifts,
and of His gifts
the most obscure
cause cleanest cure.

We rant, we rave
for God to save,
but God saves all
who prostrate fall.

Away by Christ
our sins were sliced;
now His great reign
rids Death's domain.

Dear God, we pray
that all we say
and all we pen
be Thine. Amen.

Good Friday

If ever rain should sing a hymn
throughout and throughin;
if ever unfolding buds with tiny pain
should bloom big over meadows;
if ever hearts in deepest pain
should find a silver light--
let it be on Good Friday,
our day of holy surrender to
more than we know,
our bow of reverence to
more than we are,
our wail of grief for
all that might have been,
our needed emptying
of the cup of self to
find an inner morning--
an Easter wherein
the Sun of Love
will rise again.

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Graduation

Our ride
slows
to a halt

and the man says
"Everybody off."

We don't
quite know
where
we've been

and we're a
little dizzy
as we step

down into
the future.

Grandstand Fantasy

A Study in Emptiness

Grandstand at sundown
embraces an emptiness
replete with potential
watchers and watched.

Screams and cheers, none,
nor any spilled soda pop,
nor adolescent boys testing
their fear of strangers--

Greased pigs won't play
before an empty house,
nor will jockeys race fast
horses for just nobody.

Shiny seats wait, all pretty
in rows, for homo sapiens
to bounce upon their boards
from planned excitement.

Soldier-like in rank and file,
bright red backrests stand
at rigid attention where no
eyes are and no announcer is.

Low sunlight plays to the
stands (since no performers
are), revealing geometry
never proven by Euclid.

Emptiness is given shelter
under one generous roof,
pillars reaching up and out
in a far-flung Calvary.

No one departs and throws
away no trash, asking
"Where does an empty
grandstand go at night?"

Grief Is a Thief

Grief is a thief
you have urged
to take you away
but with your own
key locks you,
wet with tears,
inside your musty
woolen closet and
turns out the light.

Dark in your trap
shared with moths
you cry long past dry
and choke on all why.

When you know it's
time (and you will):

burst
the closet open
into a room,
burst
the room open
into a sky,
settle for no moons,
pray past all suns,
inhale from Cosmos.

Not earth are you
but the damp wick
of a future shining.

Strike your match
and light the way.

Griefs That Stay

Some griefs
(and you know
yours by name)

twist so terribly
deep that instead
of crying

you carry them like
inoperable bullets
inside your flesh

and feel their
twinges every few
seconds without

letting on
to even
your dearest--

damnable, beautiful
griefs that fit you
like a bone.

Haiku

Empty church: alone
I sit in sermonless awe
as steeple doves coo.

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Haiku Basket

As flies skim the pond
my eyes can't seem to follow
the words in this book.



Early smoke rises
out of old chimneys at dawn,
dark on dark in rows.



A blue silk pillow
makes sitting upon hard earth
something like pleasure.



Drawn by one blossom,
this bee hovers and circles
in fragrant delay.



6 Christmas Haiku

Ice on pine needles--
can it hear the Christmas bells?
Can anything not?



Spider in the drain--
Christmas whoops in the parlor--
silent, dark, the drain.



Scrub Christmas tree, bare--
rooms echo--furniture gone--
mother and child laugh.



Sleigh ride all finished--
the mare, eating Christmas oats,
hears house noise, and snorts.



Flashing Christmas lights
entrance three speechless patients
slouched in parked wheelchairs.



Tree's all taken down--
year's end--where is Christmas now?
Deep within each pulse.



Mountain cabin porch--
tall pines crowding for sunlight--
sweep, sweep, brown needles.



Fisherman casting
for luck to kill a dumb fish--
the river flows on.



Icicle drippings,
slower under western blush,
hint frozen silence.



A woodpecker clings
upside-down under his limb,
tuning the forest.



Cat crossing my yard--
shadow of the Infinite
stalking the Unknown.



Broken branch still clings
to all the tree it has known,
breeze-swayed above ground.



My sturdy white pine
preaches calm to the maples
stripped bare in the yard.



Thunderbolts today
are silent by the thousands--
but this blue won't hold.



Remembered writers
film murderously fast trains
from close to the tracks.



The most delicious
strawberries are the first ones
needing replacement.



First sun of spring floats
due east, orange, fat--for what?
Raindrops and babies.

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Haiku Poems

Western glow fading--
decrecendo of songbirds--
stars surprise the eye.



Peach blossoms unfold
new petals without hurry,
knowing the sun waits.



My body is still;
pilots must fly in airplanes
and birds must use wings.



Feathers up for sleep,
sparrows on wires chirp farewell
to the dimming day.



Near tilted tombstones
arthritic black oak branches
finger the cold sky.



Seen through train windows,
trees, like commuters, rush toward
where they've always been.



Up through city trees
a steeple stabs the blue sky
with its metal cross.



Windswept blades of grass
lightly brush the abbey wall;
monks seek light within.



Opening lotus,
pure white in morning sunlight--
suddenly, a fly.



Gray old man shimmers
far ahead on the blacktop
with his red gas can.



Uplifted tree roots
protect a torn nest of wrens
barren of feathers.



A soggy songbook
floats among twelve frogs singing
greenly in the pond.



A brief breeze pivots
over ballerina toe
then swishes away.



Leaden clouds rumble,
falling down loud steps of storm;
pounds of sky come down.



Speckled night whirls on,
a slow, hypnotizing wheel
around Polaris.



Green groan of ocean
releasing flimsy gray clouds
to the moving moon.



Weak of bone, old men
listen to the wail of trains
far in the distance.



Each star's faint twinkle
is a holy statement sent
for all eyes to hear.



Brutal ocean's roar
tames to glimmering dewdrops
on frail gossamers.



Raging tiger eyes
shine out from jungle shadows,
rubies on velvet.



Pulses of green life
gently release tulip blooms
from tight, aching buds.



Above moving night
from her crescent-shaped ladle
the moon pours silver.



The wren's prism throat
casts up a rainbow of sound
over summer grass.



Warm southerly breeze,
scented by May-bloomed lilacs,
breathes early heaven.



Roaring punch-presses
stamp out bright dangling earrings
for delicate ears.



In my dream I hear
spiders strumming their cobwebs
under humming trees.



Sudden silence is
pregnant with eons of sounds
waiting to be heard.



The listening sun
paints a coat of life on earth
by way of reply.



Love's pure silver flame
gives each innermost spirit
invisible warmth.



Silent cathedral,
every stone a work of love,
embraces the Christ.



This cricket-filled night
gives forth undulating sounds--
dark respiration.



Heavy bumblebee,
magnetized upward by air,
masters gravity.



In twilight far off
a mother calls for her child--
two eternal notes.



Crescendos of light
build an eastern harmony
from solar rhythm.

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A Haiku Quilt for Y2K

My house is burning--
a neighbor has brought coffee
which tastes excellent.

Hill of snowy pines--
has anyone let you know
about Y2K?

A falling red leaf
lightly taps my left shoulder.
Yes, I say--I've heard.

Orange maple leaves,
why can't I prolong your lives?
"We're the clock for yours."

Sitting by flowers--
silence--until a petal
falls upon a stone.

Spring rain is falling
on a fountain shooting high--
not a drop confused.

Water drop forming
on this tree leaf tip--how does
it know when to fall?

Open, empty truck
parked beneath a star-filled sky--
what is there to haul?

The sun rises red
and fifty more pedants are
experts on haiku.

Desert sun cooling
hotly down the western sky--
lizards blink, stir, wait.

Lazy snow circles,
crystals landing like light planes
on brown grass runways.

Tulip buds in rows
bloom by bloom become cannons
shooting at the sun.

War in your closet
hangs somewhere behind your clothes
needing awful love.

New snow -- old snowman
leaning in the yard next door,
one coal for a wink.

Haiku Recursion

5-7-5 form
can say anything at all
with title or not.

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Harmlessness

I saw a spider
on my wall and left it there—
gone now, but still is.

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Healing Meditation #1

Always, alwhy, alwhere
we breathe our breaths
within the great Breath.
Gentle now, the breath,
and open, the mind.

If bothered by a grudge,
forgetting.
If squeezed by a fear,
faith in faith in faith.
If too many self-mirrors,
outgoing to the hurting.
If mental moneyclaws,
giving both little and big.
If outstriking rage,
surges of forgiveness.

In our jungle of errors,
out of dark unknowing
each new leaf sprouts
as a separate pain, regret,
disease, or loss of body--
but each, when assimilated,
becomes a sacred leaf
in our Book of Knowledge.

For strength, going soft.
In softness, seeing light.
In light, discerning duty.
In duty, finding joy.

Healing Meditation #2

Where I hurt, I grow.
Where I hurt, I learn.
Where I hurt, I atone.
Where I hurt, I am alive.

If I could know why I hurt,
and go back enough in time,
I would uncause it, and yet
I know that now is too late.

But now is back in time for later,
so I need to learn all I can
of the living ethics and physics
to avoid future pain.

I search for the Book of Ethics
and find it in other people's eyes.
I struggle with force and matter
and find it all gentling with love.

Where I learned, let me teach.
Where I suffered, let me heal.
Where I took, let me give.
Where I stumbled, let me warn.

Healing Meditation #3

Gentle go the waves
that heal me in the night.
Soft are the sounds
that give my body light.

Now my room is dark
and sleep is nowhere near,
but hints of future joy
are warding off all fear.

Soon will come a time
when pain has gone away,
when Yes, a healthy Yes,
will have its mellow way.

With medicine to comfort
and universe to cure
I see no need to worry
as impure turns to pure.

Hearing

Tinnitus, like God,
is always in there to hear
during quiet times.

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Her Grace Returns

When one's Muse returns
from a multi-year absence
in undisclosed locales,
the avenues in the mind
host a parade of images.

The inner church bells ring,
confetti flutters down
from open windows,
mothers hug the children,
fathers hug the mothers,
and it is just a dandy time.

Her Grace rides elegantly
in the back of a convertible,
waving, throwing candy
to eager running children
and kisses to everyone else
on both sides of the mind.

After the parade is over
she enters one's abode
and seats her welcome self
within the heart of the soul.

Here and the Ground

The shiny car you drive is
going into the ground.
All the neighborhood trees are
going into the ground.

Buildings, all of them, are
going into the ground.
Your sofa and your dog are
going into the ground.

But soul--have you a soul
that won't go into the ground?
What force can keep your essence
from going into the ground?

Suppose your body quits and
does go into the ground--
where will your soul then be?
My own says, "Here, right here.

"The love that makes life life is
dwelling in your here,
and all you ever gave is
coming back to your here.

"Thing and thing and thing may be
going into the ground,
but where can your here ever go
except--exactly here?"

Here at the Close of Christmas Day

Tonight the season
breathes easier again--
the ribbons are cut,
the paper's been ripped.

We silenced last night
with candles and song,
and today we enjoyed
the meal of the year,

allowing for Uncle Carl's jokes,
Cousin Peter's pomposity,
and righteous kitchen clatter
before the family feast began.

The season's reason?
I don't ask why,
nor does why
ask me--

I just roll with days
of way too much
and nights of less
than nothingness

like a child held safe
in the all-year arms
of Mother Everything,
whose love is all there is.

I used to fear, then fall
from these arms of love,
but where was there to fall
except Here?

If Here can be taken away,
we are doomed--but so far,
Here seems all there's ever been
and perhaps will ever be.

This living room now smells
of candle smoke and new perfumes
as Christmas magic leaks away
into midnight, we still we.

A Hidden Sky

There is a sky
below the ground.

I saw it today
through puddle windows
along my street.

Big sycamore leaves
were floating in it
like balloons becalmed.

Trees were towering
downly up
beneath my feet.

If streets contain a sky,
do you and I?

Homeglow after Visitors

Two couches
smile in dim light
over the active
weights they
recently bore.

Spots on the wallpaper
remember certain
apt verbs.

Ceiling regions
glow with laughings
over sudden quips.

Hopes,
confessions,
worries
have now slipped out
through the windows
to germinate or vanish
in the sod outdoors.

Are the smiles,
the glows,
the illuminations
that haunt our home
still stirring within
our sometime
visitors?

A spring inside
the older couch
chuckles.

Honored Guest

Came on a thread,
you did,
to shine,
you do,
a warm beam,
you are,
from a sun
we all share.

Bless the thread
that brought us you,
and you that brought
the beam to share.

Natural,
you seem,
and fresh,
completely,
as rainwater
seeking grass,
or daffodil buds
blooming for April.

Like a stirring of air
through an open
window, you freshen
the whole house.

Hope and Love

As the earth spins into day and night,
so the human soul basks in light
and quivers in darkness.
And as the earth sometimes has foul weather,
the soul too has it hurricanes and rains.

Hope and love are, were, will be.
Hope is God's eternal nudge in our ribs.
Something is ahead
and, knowing not its shape,
we push toward it nonetheless.
Hope pulls us.

Love is everywhere, and always has been.
Love existed before we came to join it.
Love made us.
Love makes us make more of us.
Love is God's radiant comfort in our souls.
Love binds us.

With hope to pull and love to bind,
we need not fear.

When all is seemingly lost,
when it is nighttime in the soul,
when there is wind and rain,
there are yet two forces to sustain us.

Hope.
Love.

Hot Date or Soul Mate?

Your gaze
Betrays
Your dip
Of lip.

I know
The flow
Of thought
You've bought.

Your eye
Won't lie.
Confined
Behind

Your mask,
You ask,
"Won't you
Be true?"

Nor I
Will lie--
I'm true
With you.

How I Clean

As a vaccer
I'm a slacker;
as a hacker
I'm a stacker.

I have trouble
sorting rubble
till it's double
triple double.

I go all out
till I stall out,
then I haul out
all the fallout.

How We Came to Know Truth

Our village mystic (who,
by
the way, is President
of the National
Mystical Association)
decided he had studied
enough.
He would, by
God, climb
the sacred mountain
out beyond the village
limits and find
out what
was what.
We villagers don't
understand him,
but we know he must be
quite
great.
Someone even says there's
a faint halo around
his head, visible
only to the more advanced
souls.
This is probably
true, for why would an advanced
soul lie
to anyone?
So Mike (our mystic) climbed
the sacred mountain
a week
ago when there
was a quadruple conjunction
of some planets I'd heard
of and some I hadn't
(I don't understand
these things, but I did
think the air
smelled different that
day).
Mike meditated (you know, where
you sit
down and do holy
things to yourself)
and then climbed the
mountain just like he owned
the damn thing.
We all watched from the
bottom.

He was at the top about
half an hour,
maybe receiving his
instructions,
and then he came back
down.

We all gathered around
him and asked him what
he saw, what he learned,
what he heard, how did it
feel?

Mike rolled
his eyes up and
began to speak in a
quiet but firm voice, saying:
"I have been to the mountain
top.

I have had
an Experience.

I cannot possibly tell you
how it really was.

I must speak in veiled
terms for your own good.

I say unto you,
'Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
What's false is false,
And what's true is true.'"

As he spoke,
I thought I noticed a faint
shimmer of light
around his holy head.

It is humbling to be
able to live in the
same village with
one who knows,
and who knows
he knows,
and has a
halo according
to some reports.

Howling at a Real Moon

What is illusion,
really?
Is it the satisfied look on a rich
lady's face?
Is it a boy smelling the evening
breeze as he rubs his magic
lamp and has
visions?
Is it the mathematically
maternal thrill of writing a tight
algorithm for a computer?

What is reality,
sort of?
Is it the headache after too
much ice cream too
fast?
Is it the birds before a spring
sunrise singing their hearts
out?
Is it the symphonic
climax hurled out
of a conductor's
baton?

If we knew what illusion is,
would it be found but a
word?
If we knew what reality is,
how long before the knowing
were but a memory?

Give me a breath at a time
and keep your reality.
Show me a round
orange moonrise
and I will fully embrace illusion.

I look into your eyes
and I see the absolute
reality of illusion.
Then it is that I forget the
illusion of reality.

Humid Evening

I finger gently the meshy steel diagonals
in our manufactured backyard fence
as lightning bugs dazzle a slow-dance
in the swimmy summer-wet air.

The therapeutic pendulum of a breeze-driven
willow branch entrances me, and merely glancing
at our telephone pole mutely poking into the yellow
setting sky flares a human fragrance in me.

Grasp me by the arm and try to feel
my feelings if you can, as flimsy and confused
as the evening sounds reflecting about our
house and joining the silence of grass.

Praise the Lord of Emptiness as evening's first
star suggests its way through the stratosphere,
retinas all over the city tickling with its improbable
light. Breathe the whole slippery sky with me.

Kings have died failing to acquire a splinter of our
well-being. Look at the grass and the fireflies and the
fence, all swimming in a soup of quaintly offered
love from some source unknown despite knowers.

I, Not It

"It makes me sad, or mad, or glad,"
says my friend Marge.
"This It is all in life I've had,
and It's quite large.

"My It brings in my every mood
and guides my thoughts.
It even guides my choice of food,
makes shoulds and oughts.

"This It is pulling all of me
down toward the ground
with unrelenting gravity
as if I'm bound."

Then one tells Marge to take the "t"
away from "It"--
that Christ expired on the "t"
to make us fit.

When all that's left of "It" is "I,"
there's no excuse
to blame an "It" or question why
you get abuse.

The "I" is God as much as you
and is pristine.
Your freedom all to God is due,
serene, unseen.

Ignorance Implicit

The flowers bloom.
The wind blows.

The president's soldiers torture
their prisoners before cameras.

The flowers bloom.
The wind blows.

Spam infests the world's e-mailboxes.

The flowers bloom.
The wind blows.

US lawyers advise that torturing is legal
as long as you mean well.

The flowers bloom.
The wind blows.

The Internet hosts vicious viruses
created by the brilliant ignorant.

The flowers bloom.
The wind blows.

Partisan hatred pours out of talk shows
and animates political seekings.

The flowers bloom.
The wind blows.

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Illumination

Full moon through the trees
reflects the Lord of Being—
some just think it's neat.

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Innerness

How potent is the silent voice within the heart--
like roses screaming quietly
at the top of their scents.
Our inner self turns a valve here,
flips a switch there,
rechannels a thought, all undetected,
guiding the mind with commands never heard by ears.

We inhale a vital force sent up from the sun,
full of planetary power, star strength,
universal unity.
We exhale such love as we can muster from our
little microverse,
radiating peace into nearest air
and farthest galaxies.

We breathe our relentless ripples
onto shimmering oceans of spirit.
Each star hears our silence.
Our mental voice imprints itself
on a forgetless tablet of inner space,
indelible as a baby's first cry.

When we listen, the cold wind carries
the moan of mother earth
and the rising moon reflects
the sighs of setting sun.
Those who hear the universe
humming its silent symphony
learn to love each lento chord.

Strum my heart, you silent waves of love,
with your tuneful touch,
and help me sing the song of space
in the sanctum of my skull.

The Inside Door

What, to go out through the inside door,
is gained and lost and revealed?
What if some organ resigns early
or an oncoming car presents crashdom
when yet no I in me prefers cessation?

From jelly and muscle and bone
did birth make me me?
Get away, I heartily say--
I rode this body into solidness
and trained it in the school of earth.

Down it goes, you say?
Slips off me overcoatlike?
Whoever in me is my inner me
says "Wasn't that life a honey?"
as out I slip through the inside door

and maybe muse
"Well, well, well"
spaciously for 800 years or so
until some earthbound man
has too many beers and

gets his wife or his woman
gently to beckon me
down to her womb
for another grade
in school.

An Instrument of Heaven

You've played the organ and piano
at this corner church
for more than 700 Sundays,
and the Wednesday choir rehearsals
that went with them
along with Saturdays
of practice and preparation.
You've prayed with your fingers
as our pastors have prayed with sermons.

The organ is a noble instrument
that brings to human ears
the music of the spheres,
and you yourself have been
a willing instrument
of the Unseen Hand
that moves our world
toward beauty, peace, and truth.

The organ only makes the sound.
Your hands and feet only play the keys.
Your eyes only read the notes.
But God has told you in your heart of hearts
to bring His voice to human ears,
and you have said, "I will."
He has made abundant use of your
obedient mind and body to channel
a bit of heaven into a troubled world.

You now step down
and turn your keyboard over
to other willing hands,
but you'll return to play again.
Since God has played you for this long
as His obedient instrument,
He will never let you rust away unused.
He will set your hands to other tasks.

The sounds of your Sunday music
remain only briefly
within the sanctuary walls,
but they will echo down through the years

within the hearts of those of us
whom they have nourished.

To Linda, with love,
From Alan

(Written in 1991, discovered
and posted in 2014)

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Intermission

There can come a moment
when stillness reigns,
when the actor in the mind
is curtained away from view,
when reading is unneeded
though the book be open.

Images stream in and out
with no conscious guidance
or disturbance, each
morphing into the next.

With animation suspended,
whole libraries may be
now serenely renounced,
classrooms unattended,
conversations unengaged,
writing saved for a later muse.

Is this interlude a taste
of the long and quiet phase
that humans call heaven?
An after-state wherein we
reap the ecstasy we sowed
while living the virtues?

For now the mind
is permitted its silence,
and the heart and soul
their benign repose.

Interpreting Geese

A flock of Canada geese
flies overhead,
honking whenever
honks are needed.

One goose veers
away on its own
to the left.
Another splits right.

Zen awareness might
say, "Ah, yes: the
goose and the goose
and the flock. This is."

A philosopher might
see three divergent
realities coming
into being above.

An ornithologist
might ahem and
expertly affirm, "Yes,
geese will do that."

According to a poet:
"Feather-flung loners,
ecstatic with freedom, fly
straight to their unknowns."

Hunters say blam.

Introduction

Beneath my friendly laugh,
down where you can't see--
worms.

Quiet, warm worms
from a soiled past.
No needs have they,
secure in my all.

They meditate behind
my generosity,
ride calm and innocent
in my essence,
come with me everywhere
through anger,
comfort,
love.

I must apologize.
Not even a fish would want them.

Anyway--here, meet my worms.
They have no names.

Do yours?

An Inward East

To calm a care or soothe an anger storm
you pause to breathe your vital inside sun
and, richly quiet with its steady glow
of coremost tenderness and flooding peace,
you reinterpret body's aching bones
as levers placed for mystic ministry,
propelled and infinitely smiled upon
by forces which, when tapped, give tenfold strength.
You find your earth eyes lidded from the room
and focused now on lightened higherness.

In light we are as one, beloved friend.
How can a doubt or fear feel more than mere
when in and up we set our inner sight
to see a splendor further east than east?

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It All Rises

Slicing the mountain
with a cool silence you can smell,
slivers of pink light
rub and brush the crags.
My ribs thrill out past the horizon.

Weaving this sunrise
of mind,
heart,
spirit,
we immortally must kiss
from across a smiling distance.

The euphoria I feel
embracing your possibilities
proves underneath all doubt
there is a yes
of stranger stronger scentedness
(sleeping fifty million winks a second)
than possibly any manufactured no.

Itinerant

On my electric wire
a bold red cardinal
brimming with eons
of joyful songs
loudly greets the day
from his overflow

while I on my lawn
try to reconstruct
from tuneful parts
an ancient whole
before he flies
to another yard.

January Adagio

Tonight at 10:30 I went out
for my walk. In the distance
I heard a major commotion
of geese. At first I thought
a flock might fly overhead,
though the hour was far too late
for geese to be aloft.

But the sound wasn't moving.

I heard a train's rumble,
then its mournful horn.
A freight was crossing
the railroad bridge
over the Fox River
close to where the geese
were overnighting.

As I turned around toward home
I still could hear them fret and scold
in chaotic counterpoint with
the diesel's basso continuo.

And the stars tonight burned
bright holes in the sky, decorating
bare tree branches overhead
like lingering holiday lighting.

After the train had rumbled off
to where nocturnal trains all go,
the neighborhood assumed a hush
perturbed only by my footsteps.

Hardly anything is quieter
than distant sleeping geese
and star-bespeckled trees.

Jazz

Jazz is
freedom
in a box.

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Job Interview

Through my windows
I see your windows and frame,
your curtains, shutters, and paint,
but I know zilch of the private
hassles and jollities in your house.

I properly inquire about your degree,
your courses, your work history,
and then watch you dance
your verbal employment jig.
But I must not ask into the chasms
of your being
where lies the real you--
such would be corporate taboo.

I do hear that catch in your voice
over a certain part of your past.
I do see that eagerness
to dwell on a fleeting achievement.

I am Sigmund Freud
analyzing your vocational dreams,
and you are Napoleon Hill
thinking and growing rich.
You are strategizing on your side
of the chessboard by all the rules
as I offer gambits here and there,
then inscrutably castle.

Whole dictionaries of words remain
unspoken in our 45 ticking minutes,
and yet somehow
I recognize my story in yours.
You and I are each someone
struggling to carve out
a safe and joyful survival from
a murderously mysterious world.
We are each a failingly successful,
triumphantly agonizing being
making small steps
toward what appears right.

You misread me
if you see in me a company man.
I am in a way you,
on trial,
absorbing what meaning
can be made of our encounter.

You wonder what I am thinking
as I speak glibly of opportunities,
and I wonder who you really are
as you smile with hollow confidence.
Will I give you a favorable rating?
Will you make us a good employee?
Fate has hung you and me
in her balance
on either side of this empty table.

When we go out from our room,
we will shake hands,
smile pleasantries,
and fade back into our
respective anonymities,
each hoping we have done
right by the other,
and each knowing we haven't,
quite.

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Juggler

The blue-black plate of sky
Teeters on a point of zenith
Like a juggler's disc
Twirling on a stick.
Intrepid owls (2)
Interrogate the
Intruding moon
Until splashjangling
Dawn splits
Night blue into
A billion oranges
Molded into a smolder.
Up comes the sane sun
Wheeling the lunatic
Moon on ahead and
Tumbles it off the brink
Of spinning sky,
To be caught by the
Juggler and thrown up
There perhaps again.

July Brushstrokes

gradual sliding low of Sol...
flashings out when trees allow...
sidewalk bathed in fading light...
yellow-green this muted hour...
whitening sky holds twilit breath...
shadows paint each passing trunk...
cicadas sing "six weeks till frost"...
hints of night inspire bird choirs...
all scent all sound all inner yes...

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Just Asking

I ask how eyes know when to wake
and lovers, when to love,
how engines feel when pulling trains,
why planets need to spin.

Does every point in cosmic space
touch every other point?
Can money buy creative thought?
Is dark the price of light?

Does every pain result in gain?
Does living have a goal?
And what's left out when parts fall short
of summing up the whole?

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Karma Yoga

Living every hour
in the exact middle
of my weaknesses,
I work some more.

Knowing the ways
I fell apart before
and took poor paths,
I work some more.

To piece together
my fragmentary
feelings for peace,
I work some more.

Pretty sure I will
later fail to restrain
some urges within me,
I work some more.

When all of my jobs
on earth are done and
I'm in and out of heaven,
I will work some more.

Keeping Here

I wake to morning's
window-filtered sounds
and hear a
cardinal outside
my bedroom,
daring to fill
the early air with a
questioning refrain:

"Where's here?
Where's here?
Where's here?"

An idea flashes brainward
out of recent sleep as,
having risen from my bed,
I stand within
a splash of sunlight
on the carpet--
an idea taking on words:
"How you feel
is from what you do.
To feel differently,
do differently.
Start here."

I stand still in the light.
"What changes shall I make?" I ask
whoever's listening,
outdoors or innerly.

The same cardinal,
broadcasting
guru-like atop
the neighbor's
television tower,
gives simple counsel
three times again:

"Keep here.
Keep here.
Keep here."

Odd,
but on the farm
when I was young
I used to shoot
birds
with my BB gun.

Kind of

Is is all biz
Seem smacks of dream
Why goes with cry
Love always in the of the from the out of the all through the

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Lawful Body

Someone or I built me a body
to serve as my earthly house,
which, so long as I respect her laws,
carries me without complaint.

Whoever I am wants too much
sometimes and overstrains my body
by climbing to futile heights
or pleasuring too much,

but body keeps me legal,
staging strikes and slowdowns,
suing for her rights
through ills and pains.

All around me I see
billions of other bodies too,
each tethering her curious occupant
from straying too far into folly.

Lawful body constrains caprice
with motherly insistence until,
strained and weakened, body herself
gravitates into a waiting grave.

When earth-given body releases me
and melts again into her humid earthy matrix,
I will float freely to an ethereal electricity
to greet forgotten shining friends.

Dust falls to greater dust, indeed,
but soul buoys up to radiant Soul
like a child rushing gratefully armward
into all it knows of the maternal Eternal.

Leaf Dance

Breath of a little whirlwind
on a warm November day
plucked up some leaves
from the neighbor's pile
and danced them in circles.

Arrested from our walk,
we both stood amazed
at the twirly bouncing
of lively dead leaves
above a clackety street.

Invisibly obvious, our airy
ballerina pirouetted there
a full three minutes before
releasing her larger leaves
to the ground as in a tease.

But still we saw tiny wisps
of lighter leaves and dust
spinning further away
until nothing remained
but a transparent grace.

Letting Go

March rattling the windows
and thoughts buzzing in my brain
keep me from dropping into
a Sunday afternoon nap.

Outside, the musical moans
of swaying trees rise and fall,
and a persistent branch
rubs on the shingles above.

Sinking now in spite of the noise,
I drift down through my senses
toward the silky bliss
that beckons below.

Just at the point of falling free,
I hear a windy crescendo
play catchy rhythms
on the window panes again.

Allow me my nap, dear windows.
I am swaying with the trees.
Let me fall into the source.
Let me fall....

Library

Books of mine,
silent friends
on the shelves,
rows and rows of
spines erect,
ready for reception.

Plodding through
the pages of these friends,
will I find any life?
Any electricity?

I find concepts
built upon concepts
built upon concepts,
traded and stolen and
borrowed and twisted
from one to another
until the cows
drink milk shakes.

My friends in rows are
corpses in a mental
mausoleum.
I wish them well
in their neat slots,
but I must live awake
and alive and alert
and aware.

Thank you, my friends,
for the memories,
but mother moment
jerks me to attention.
I will sing the now
into the here
until I join you
upon the shelves.

Listening to Christmas

Have you ever heard snow?
Not the howling wind of a blizzard,
not the crackling of snow underfoot,
but the actual falling of snow?

We heard it one night in Wisconsin
quite unexpectedly
while walking up a hill
toward our cabin in the woods,
a soft whisper between footsteps.
We stopped, switched off our flashlights,
and just listened.
All around us in the darkness
we heard the gentle fall
of snow on snow.
No wind, no sound
but the snow.

Have you ever heard Christmas?
Not the traffic noises in the city,
not the bells and hymns and carols,
beautiful as they are,
not even the laughter of your children
as they open their presents--
but Christmas itself?

Have you been by yourself
and just sat and listened to the silence within,
patiently, without letting the mind
race to the next Christmas chore?

Perhaps if you have,
you felt the pulse of all humanity
beating in your own heart.

Perhaps you noticed
an outflowing of love
for all your brothers and sisters
on the earth,
a soft sense of Oneness
with all that lives.

In the silence of a snowy night,
listen intently, holding your breath,
and you may hear snow on snow.

Serene, alone,
undisturbed by thought,
listen to the silence in your heart,
and you may hear Christmas.

Looking Forward

Long after I have laughed my last,
corn husks will still flap and cackle yearly
in the frosty wind.
Hopeful farmers will plant and reap
and worry through every weather.

Statuesque cows will still moo and moan
their mantras low like tubas in metal sheds
incensed with daily hay.

In select suburbs far from farms,
ladies with airs will continue tinting
and teasing their failing hair
or flashing acquired fashionabilities
into their lighted full-length mirrors--
ladies who will still ache at night
for a gleaming knight
between snorings
of their well-off wimp.

By then I will have poked
this life's reapings and hopings
up through my cranial chimney
and passed beyond breath.
With no nose to interfere,
coffee may smell richer.
Free of fumbling fingers,
I may play Bach heaven-like
on an unmoolecular piano.

Then, by and by and by,
in my next soulbeat,
I could emerge again
from a provided womb,
suck into baby lungs
a deep inspiration,
and cry within my new hell
for a heaven of love and milk.

I'm wondering now if,
rather than burden my brain
with all of this forward thought,
I need to read a good mystery.

Love Is

Sunlight twinkles yellow
off the neighbor's tree leaves,
stirred by a sibilant breeze.
All is well.

The sky is empty, empty, empty, and azure.
Do not worry.

The rose window decal
on our east window glows
with what glass and plastic know of love--
crimson, aqua, yellow, and amethyst,
concentric in twelves.
It is all right.

Your eyes shine behind mine,
energizing my thoughts,
giving off a gentle voltage.
Fret not.

You are more than you are.
You are the prism,
the white light,
the rainbow,
and more.

Notice your depth sometime
as you awaken from sleep,
and rest assured
that depth never dies.

Serenity,
a smooth current of calmness,
surrounds.
Permeates.
Is.
Is.
Is.

It is too silly now to say
what love is,
or that I love you.
Words trouble the serenity.
Definitions becloud the sky.

Tremulant leaves
twinkle sunlight.
The sky is empty, pure.
The rose window
glows with color.
Your eyes,
your deep eyes--
enough.

A Love Song

From heart of space
all gift all give
no star too small
to hold it all.

Where up a flower
how down a cloud
can any heart
with love unbloom

One breath of spring
one second on
the spatial clock
but oh the breath

When bliss is work
and silence bliss
up down our cord
no song unsings

All alls need more
all mores need all
yet love is nearer
than purest most

Lullaby

For a new grandchild

When Mom sings me a melody
And with a kiss turns down the light,
I drift off free and lazily
To join the mysteries of the night.

Across the sky soft clouds go by,
In each a face I've known by day.
They sing and sigh a lullaby
Which soothes, delights, and fades away.

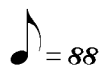
In waves unknown I rock alone
As if my bed were a little boat
That sails a zone of undertone
And keeps me safe as I dream and float.

Now the clouds begin to wane and thin,
The last one showing my mother's face.
She strokes my chin and brings me in
From far adrift to her warm embrace.

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Lullaby

Alan Harris
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 = 88

Voice

mf When Mom sings me a

Piano

mf

mel - o - dy And with a kiss — turns down the light, I

drift off free and la - zi - ly To join the mys - ter - ies

Lullaby

of the night. A - cross the sky soft clouds go by, In

The first system of the musical score for 'Lullaby' consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: 'of the night. A - cross the sky soft clouds go by, In'. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The piano part features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand, primarily using chords and moving lines.

each a face — I've known by day. They sing and sigh a

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. The vocal line (top staff) has the lyrics: 'each a face — I've known by day. They sing and sigh a'. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) maintains the same rhythmic and harmonic structure as the first system, providing a gentle accompaniment to the vocal melody.

lull - a - by which soothes, de - lights, and fades a - way. In

The third and final system of the musical score concludes the piece. The vocal line (top staff) has the lyrics: 'lull - a - by which soothes, de - lights, and fades a - way. In'. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) continues with the same accompaniment pattern, ending with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained note in the left hand.

waves un - known I rock a - lone As if my bed were a

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "waves un - known I rock a - lone As if my bed were a". The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment, with the middle staff in a treble clef and the bottom staff in a bass clef. The piano part features a steady accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands.

lit - tle boat That sails a zone of un - der - tone And

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics: "lit - tle boat That sails a zone of un - der - tone And". The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with a consistent accompaniment, featuring a mix of chords and moving lines in both the treble and bass clefs.

keeps me safe as I dream and float. Now the clouds be - gin to

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics: "keeps me safe as I dream and float. Now the clouds be - gin to". The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with a consistent accompaniment, featuring a mix of chords and moving lines in both the treble and bass clefs.

Lullaby

wane and thin, The last one show-ing my mo - ther's face. She strokes my chin and

The first system of the musical score for 'Lullaby' consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are: 'wane and thin, The last one show-ing my mo - ther's face. She strokes my chin and'. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords and moving lines.

brings me in From far a - drift to her warm em-brace

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'brings me in From far a - drift to her warm em-brace'. The musical notation follows the same structure as the first system, with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment in a grand staff.

p *rit.* *pp* *ten.*

The third system of the musical score concludes the piece. It includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) at the beginning, *rit.* (ritardando) in the middle, and *pp* (pianissimo) towards the end. The word *ten.* (tenuto) is written above the final notes. The piano accompaniment ends with a final chord in the treble clef.

Luminance

Room lamps are all on—
how become this bright within?
Not a slight question.

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Mahler's 5th Symphony

Overfull fountain,
he rises abundantly
from where springs
are fed, creates from
why hearts must beat
timpanic against
gravitation.

His concerted breezes
blow confusing beauty in
through windows where
merely walls once were.

Triumph, sorrow,
fire, spirit,
love, joy--
all play and pray
in sonic sanctum.

After the applause
we bring our amazement
home and listen to
the wallpaper sing.

Making a Tree

"Make us a tree," said the master.

"We have no wood, no leaves," despaired the pupil.

"Plant a seed," said the master.

"We have no tree to make a seed," despaired the pupil.

"Search for a tree," said the master.

"We live in a desert," despaired the pupil.

"Go to a forest," said the master.

"We would have to bid farewell," despaired the pupil.

"Farewell," said the master.

"Farewell, Master; I am leaving," declared the pupil.

"Then stay," said the master with a gentle smile,
"for if you are leaving, your branches will
soon bear seeds."

Man Walking

There is a man
walking behind me
on Wood Street
in Chicago.

He can't know
my heart hums
a surging theme
from Movement 1
of Mahler's Tenth.

He can't know
why I am walking
on Wood Street
in Chicago.

And why am I?
It takes too long
to think about.

Who is this man
behind me,
walking?

What flavors
his feelings?
What obstacles
has he overcome?
What song
is in him?

I somehow am
this man walking
on Wood Street
in Chicago.

I am
his walkingness
behind me,
his grapplingness
with his day.

I can only know
my own form
but he and I
are breathing of
the same Breath.

Mahler's Tenth
plays on within me
as I enter a building.

The man continues
along the street
paying absolutely
no attention to me,

this man walking
on Wood Street
in Chicago
who I am.

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Mary and the Moderns

Her name was Mary
and she was regional and regal,
and Gabriel whispered to her, beautifully--
swift Gabriel, God's holy messenger.

Reconvening Congressmen
besiege each other with
how are each other, fine.

And hearing the prophecy of Jesus,
she began to prepare her heart and mind
and immaculate body for holy duty.

Oklahoma will do, said one.
Where will the rest of you be?

Rounding her hips toward God
she was able to receive and conceive
in a glorious burst of almighty love
from above.

Catch any fish? Well, not
very many big ones. We just
missed the heavy season.

She murmured hymns thoughtfully
to herself during the growing
of all that was in her.

Around by the back fence--
you know how my yard's
laid out. Well, I dug up
a little patch there for
Myrna's flowers this spring.

She prayed calmly during the warm
weather in her country that bade noise
and fear to cease.

Truly, friends, the Lord shall
forgive you if in deepest awe and
reverence you approach his
holy throne and enter this house
of worship and give generously
of your possessions.

And by the time the welling was large
enough to attract innocuous attention
and friendly suspicion, she was in love
with her own womb and what it contained,
so that no calumny could burden her
conscience and no suspicion her calmness.

Found this little place
back off the highway where
the truckers all eat.
Really a sharp little place.

The sun shone upon her and the son
grew within her and she was with pun
without laughter with joy without pride.

Jenny will be a senior
next year if she ever gets
going on her algebra. You
know, she just cannot grasp
mathematics--it must be
her weak spot or something.

She bore an infinite rebel from her
own bone cage and sent him into the
torn world to mend and heal it
before it should devour itself
in greed and fear and sloth.

When speaking in public, one
should never consciously or
unconsciously alienate
the listeners, or one will not
succeed in communicating
one's message to them.

And respect for him was not there,
but since he was truly a vibrating
human with a divine mission,
he asserted and healed and
gently brought stones down
upon him which had been reserved for
such a rebel and agitator, and he
died with a brilliant aura about him
and without tears and with love.

It is my firm opinion
that our city government
cannot long survive without
an increase in the sales
tax percentage, and the time
to act is now, without delay.

Material and Soul

Those captivated by materialism
are walking and driving and flying about
blind to the soul, to the essence. Why?

Things that can't be seen aren't there,
they aver. The very substance of us
and the Universal Divinity--denied.

Self trumps Soul in their being,
but all Self sees is Self and Matter
and billions of threatening Others
to impress or compete with or kill.

Soul, being One with Unity, is missed.
Bombs explode. Snideness burgeons.
People bounce and hit and hurt
like a pinball in its machine.

Awaken, humans.
Be.

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May Nocturne

Half a cool moon
peekaboos along through leafing trees
over a suburban sea of haunting sounds.

I follow the dim white sidewalk,
hearing rhythmic whispers
from my hush puppies,
when suddenly a vigilant Pekinese
barks out its puny protest and retreats,
chain dragging against wood.

Evening's sonic ambiance
flows intravenously through me,
every outer sound seeming to well up
from some ghostly inner depth.
As I move along, a faraway car honks
a velvet chord into my core.
Now a strobing jetliner
thunders overhead
and reverberates in my belly,
the after-rumblings in its wake
fading away into a silence
too immense and profound
for human thought to fathom.

I stop beside a fragrant lilac bush
and stare at the sky's endless upness.
The waning moon seems content
to be quietly lunar,
lopsidedly smiling from its effortless perch.

Aloud I ask the moon,
"Where am I?"
A startled bird flutters in the lilacs
to let me know I am right here.

May Opening

May is most
too awfully grand
for this birdsung
treebreezed
dewdazzled
man.

All winter I worked
freeze-dried and
to the world dead
in my closed-up
house

until this annual
now, when May
gives me to
inhale vigor's gist
from its generous
air.

Today I've opened
windows and doors
to let livingness in
and release husks of
flies and moths and
thoughts.

My breathing replete
with May's mixed balm
of aromatic everyness,
I've fallen again fully
open.

A Meditation

In the where of almost
lies more somejoy
than define inchly gives.

Streamtake and heartgive
are so many too softness
for headly grasp to box.

If seldom all many center
in one boundless allitude,
one oneity can still still.

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Meeting

Letters to mail
and a twilit beckon
from the dimming sky
tempted tonight
my walk to the mailbox
that never seems
to come to me.

At my first turn
the fat, lop-lit moon
shouldered me
and whispered,

"I'm here with you,
never not here.
Turn you to dust
or turn you to ash,
I will be here."

I mailed my letters
and walked for home.

So simply it came to be--
my ageless friend and me
slipping past tree and tree.

Messages from Beyond

(Deceased persons have somehow carved their own epitaphs onto their gravestones.)

I like it here. Nobody ever telephones to sell me siding or insurance.

Why did my nurse let in that old-timer with the scythe?

There were errors in my life review. Why me? I'm suing.

Wow! Great near-death experience. Let's go back now.... Hello?

Hell isn't so bad. It may need work, but it's better than Chicago.

My life was a waste, but I did donate my ashes to science.

Harps sound pretty, but not a billion harps at once. I'll take hell.

Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.

Some idiot ahead of me in the tunnel turned off the white light.

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Meteor Shower over Tucson

November 18, 2001

For Brian and Patrick

3 a.m. stars were holding
brightly tight to their dome
as desert chill challenged three
watchers alarmed from bed.

The Big Dipper's handle
had fallen straight down,
but upness was everywhere
and never all to be taken in.

Earthbound, we flashlit our
paths around backyard cacti
while overhead, quick meteors
like flaming needles pierced
and sewed at the night.

Several arrived each minute
but seldom did any two
claim the same piece of sky.
Some blazed up so bright
they lit up the desert floor--
doubt but believe.

We embodied three generations,
we watchers who stood or sat
or reclined on a blanket.
Endless depth boggled our eyes
yet we little asked and less knew
why we were alive just then.

Boy, father, grandfather were we.
What all might have happened
or not happened in our three lives
to cause any of us to be absent?

We had beaten unmathematical odds
to meet for this familial, communal
sky harvest, as had the listening lizards
who heard our "Hey!" and "Whoa!"
and "Did you see that one?"

And how better to bond
than under a needled infinity?

The Middle Way

When the possible
splits inelegantly
into yes and no
or love and hate
or life and death,
a maybe may be
found in a flower
around the corner,
already half opened
and aromatic.

If a mindbox
has been closed,
sealed with tape,
and addressed for
a wrong journey,
the stewing inside
may blow it open
along a road up
to now unseen--
new steps await.

When any love
demands any hate
and gets its way,
that way is poison,
but when any hate
allows for any love
and acts within it,
possibilities arise.

Measuring won't find
the Middle Way,
nor asking friends
nor reading books,
but work and watch,
step by day,
and strive and give,
mile by year, until
where isn't it?

Midnight in Midwinter

Just the finest trace of snow fell
unseen yet tingly on my face,
and the streets were whitening under
a semi-coating of this semi-snow.
I knew the moon was up there but
clouds were having their way.
I walked familiar streets,
my neighborhood oddly hushed,
no traffic, dogs all quiet indoors.

Far off I heard the muffled horn
of a diesel engine pulling its
rumbling train along the single
trunk line past the edge of town.
With each crossing its wail and
rumble became a little louder,
and then each wail became quieter
until silence comforted the streets
like a forgiving mother after
her child's necessary cries.

All of us had our way tonight--
the snow was able to hint of itself,
my footprints showed I'd been there,
the train took some of the silence,
and midnight was allowed its hush.

Now my coat is hanging to dry
and I know where the moon is.

A Millennial Date

I'm so glad we know of
this magical forest--
don't the clear waters here
make us look younger?

End of the what?
Oh, that.
Here, let me pour you a Coke
from our picnic cooler.

Diet or regular?
With or without ice?

Of course, a toast--
here's to this endless earth
we've made and are made of.
May our one-triple-nined
planet contrive to survive
this year of broadcast hysteria,
and may the Christian
clickover of 2000 somehow
transform trumpeting holiness
into selfless silence.

Magic tricks?
No, I have none.
There's so much magic
here in this forest,
here on this earth,
here in our hearts,
that any more
would be less.

Safe this year, are we?
As safe as we feel, I'd say--
and as safe as we love,
as safe as we give,
as safe as everything
we don't understand.

We are flies on a ceiling
which is also the floor
of a marvelous room above.
Count that room's years base 10
and it's a third millennium.
Count them base God
and oneness is far enough.

Another Coke?
Yes, thank you.
A toast to all the magic
that keeps us safe
and all the daring
that keeps us magic.

Monsoon

Downpour on the roof
makes wet roaring in Tucson—
now the desert smiles.

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The Monument

Our elm began to die that spring, slowly.

Wanting stability in threat of change
we ourselves searched all summer
for a superlative glue,
found it in our store of hardest ware,
bought it dearly.

That fall our elm did die, slowly.

But we on variangled ladders
refastened the fallen leaves with
peerlessly permanent glue,
then stood back and looked.

Still it stands:
crisp, dead;
cutting the winter wind.

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Moodrider

How so up we go
and so down,
we moodriders,
spirits abuilding
and acrumbling.
A day or peaceful two,
then zapperoo,
off we tumble from our
pinnacle of hail-fellow peace into a
tar barrel of angry gloom.

Pin me up on a bulletin board
and study me, Mr. Doctor.
Give me lithium or understanding
or electric temples to make
me cool.

Thank you.
Now I see. I see the gentle
love-waves shimmering
in the atmosphere.
I see WHAT IS--
the sharp outlines of the furniture,
the swaying trees.
Here we are in reality,
or what's left of it.

Peel me off the periphery of mortals,
would someone? Why cannot I have
the normal agonies of mankind?
Why do I ride on a little toy boat through
such choppy moodwaters?
Give me a reason, please.

No, don't.
It's all right.
I see so many
normal folks in such pain,
caught in business envelopes of stuffy fright
or pulsing with radioactive rap music
or yammering in their beer.
What right have I to ask that a corner
of the universe be lifted so I can peek
at God's underwear and understand
why I am why I am?

I do my work and I pay my bills and I
contribute to the coffers of
such democracy as we have.
Oh, I emote a bit unevenly,
yes, I do.
But then, Uranus doesn't
rotate the same as the other planets do,
and it still makes the charts.

Whatever the mood,
there is a place that is here
and a time that is now
and a cracklingly deep intelligence
smack in the middle of everydude,
be he into
pills or pajamas or private jets.

How so up we go
and so down,
with a smile,
with a frown,
slightly unpinned,
scarf in the wind.

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Moon and Mars Conjunct

Walking at night
to the corner mailbox,
breathing deeply of
cool September air,
I look up and see
Mars by the full moon,
quiet friends,
like a tiny garnet
by a round opal
set in the sky's
planetary ring.

A carful of teenage girls
zooms by,
emanating shrieks and
laughs and
whoops,
careening between curbs
through our
planned community.

The red taillights
soon zigzag away
into velvet distance,
and silence prevails,
broken now by
this old mailbox accepting
my letters with a chuff
and a clanky groan.

I look skyward again.
Mars and the moon,
quiet friends still,
stare winkless from the surface
of the universe.

Has anything changed?
Yes, my letters are
in the mailbox;
yes, the car has painted
a picture in my ears;
yes, the moon is
imperceptibly
closer to Mars now--
but nothing deep
has changed.
The night has merely
taken a breath.

Mother Greets Newborn

I see you have been
traveling through the universe
without a map again.

Welcome to earth, my friend.
I breathe on you with my eyes
and I hear you with my breast.
You squall and you squirm,
but you did come to this place,
and I opened the door,
so let's learn to be together.

As your first guide
on this strange planet,
I will introduce you to your body
and mine and everything else.
Let us proceed together now
as companions.

Earth is not a bad place to live.
There is much room here for love.
There, there, there....
Drink of the earth and sleep.

Mother's Secret

A Ballad

*Tell me a secret of living, dear Mother,
a new one I've never been told--
some hint about life to remember you by
that will stay with me when I've grown old.*

"An overlooked secret of humans, my child,
is that each is a seed that will flower,
and that each has a future of limitless joy,
whatever the pains of the hour.

"And I tell you that no love has ever been lost
nor is anything out of place--
that your work is to strive, to give and to know
in this journey through time and space.

"Your grandmother told me the same when she died
and I willingly pass it along.
May your living go deeper than what you can see
and your heart hear the Infinite Song."

*Now rest, dear Mother, and sleep your sleep
in a region where pain is unknown.
As long as I live I will treasure your words
and will pass them along to my own.*

Muse on a Moonbeam

Twinkle you don't
but glow you do
not yellow not white
through my window.

Half the month I see you
riding above my maple
and I mostly ignore you
because you're steady
and I'm busy with trivia.
I file you under L
for later.

Since muses unused dry up
in the dark of the moon
(or so some poets fear),
tonight I welcome your light
as a loving underflow
beneath my busy overflow.

Tuning into your glow
far beyond the maple
yet as near as here,
I let my writing listen.

Music from Hannah

When Hannah comes over to visit our place,
She fetches our old violin from its case
And places it under her chin to be played
With its missing E-string and its horsehair all frayed.

Under Hannah Moore's unafraid, amateur touch,
The violin squeals and scratches so much
That sooner or later some listener will say,
"Oh, Hannah, let's please put the violin away."

Pretty soon she snaps open the old trumpet case,
Tries out the three valves, puts the mouthpiece in place,
And blows such a blast for a trumpeter's call
That the pictures all rattle and sway on the wall.

When Hannah brings over her flute, however,
We can sit here and listen for nearly forever
To her musical phrases both smooth and staccato
Which pleasantly shimmer with a heartfelt vibrato.

She has listened to Mozart from A to Z,
And she loves any Beethoven symphony;
Carmina Burana, the Nutcracker Suite--
The best compositions to her are a treat.

Our piano's been host to her musical fingers
Playing Mozart sonatas with feeling that lingers.
Just give her an instrument, fancy or poor,
And you'll soon hear some music from Hannah Paige Moore.

Musical Mentor

A Haiku Cycle

Burrus was his name—
Charles, my young band director
for high school music.

Inspired and fearless,
his musical soul was pure
and he taught me well.

Schubert's "Unfinished"
was my first portal to bliss
in sonic heaven.

Mr. Burrus shared
and inspired from his knowledge
and musical heart.

He loaned me one day
a distillation of sounds:
record collection.

At home in my room
with Tchaikovsky's "Pathetique"
I deepened my soul.

Startling my young ears
was Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring"—
new fire was kindled.

Six years my senior,
Chuck, my musical guru,
had opened new doors.

He was criticized
by Board of Education
for novel efforts.

Music was his love—
teaching it was his dharma—
wagon hitched to star.

Recently we met
after fifty years gone by—
met again in joy.

Music's been the root
of continuing flowers
in my spirit's life.

"Gratitude" falls short—
no mentor better than Chuck
for my youthful muse.

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My Cow, My Guru

My brown cow
lives in the now.
How?
Nohow.

Quantity and time and hay slide
through her unnoticed. She
doesn't count her stomachs
or her breaths or her days.

She seeks no acupuncture
treatments, nor does she
brew herbal teas.

Being the best she can be
holds no interest for her as
she grazingly meditates with
slow-moving hooves and jaws
over a grassy pasture.

Her Buddhist eyes see
out and in all the way.

My cow knows an old, old mantra
that she neither flaunts nor hides--
when the world needs a moo,
she gives it one.

As her swishing tail
with Zen precision
scatters a bunch of flies
like unwelcome thoughts,
my brown cow's gaze is
inly intimating to me,
"No how is there to now."

My Soul Is Something

My soul is something like a train,
switching, speeding, crawling, switching back.
It backs up sometimes to remind itself of forwardness.

My soul is something like a prism,
bending God's light in a billion-colored spectral show.
Choose your color and live with me in a rainbow.

My soul is something like a bucket,
collecting fluidities of thought,
holding the heavier, splashing out the light.

My soul is something like nothing,
appears invisible, absent, no-where,
but these thoughts form in its shadow, now-here.

Napping in the Flavors

I slid downhill
into my Sunday nap,
and there I was again,
swimming in an aromatic
alphabet soup where all words
ran together into a flavor.

If only poets could
somehow write
in immediate flavors,
bypassing all
those gangly,
awkward letters
spelling out unsavored,
predigested words--
then what a banquet
people might enjoy.

But no, the poets
have to keep on writing
precious words about
their bloodstained sunsets,
their gold leaf autumns,
their salty pepper,
and I have no idea
what other absurdities,
just to jolt
the taste buds
on our jaded tongues
away from neutral.

So anyway, my nap--
I'm now awake,
but have no splendid poems
to bring back from my bliss.
The soup there,
by the way,
was delicious.

Make your own.

needle's eye

seeming
triumphs,
no avail

years of
striving,
renounced

done,
all deeds

enjoyed,
all joys

bought,
all toys

suffered,
all pains

goods
nor
dollars
fitting
through
this
eye

proceeding
keepless,
cleansed

on ahead,
beyond this
strict way,
light seen

atomless,
now out
and into

Needlework

Pokes and Turns of Thought



Mankind's three deepest imponderables are infinity, eternity, and stupidity.



A good friendship, like a good river, comes back together after hitting a rock.



Even when things are all in place, they're very close to being out of place.



Most of us know someone whose purity of soul smells a bit like bleach.



Richest blessings move slowly because so much moves.



As for best-laid plans, mice do much better.



What could be sweeter than success, or briefer?



A teardrop is a liqueur to the future.



Quantitative psychology sticks its pins through living butterflies.



Retail marketing is the last frontier of nonsense.



Picture your worst fear. Now don't. Feel better?



Friends have love without vows, faithfulness without reason.



Who deserves to beg? At some time, everybody.



Ride in your car; ride in a mystery.



Insurance companies and doctors agree on one thing: nothing.



The kindness of a kind teacher is the kindest kindness of all.



Scientists have discovered few forms of life that behave more predictably than a manager on the way up.



When the chariot swings low for my soul, slip the horses some extra oats, okay?



Our commencement speaker revealed at length his firm grasp of the obvious.



Every new human being is an impossibility become inevitable.



Diet-conscious cannibals may eat only vegetarians.



Few besides Realtors love a snob.



In an emotional universe, kisses are the gravity.



Rumors are disagreeable to many; but then, so is the truth.



Anything you can get away with, you can't.



Christmas and a minimum universe both require a star and some generosity.



Friendships with others bring us heaven before heaven.



Brilliance needs words; character, pauses.



Fame is a sea that washes up new names like foam onto beaches.



Morning Prayer

Now I wake me up from bed;
I thank the Lord I'm still not dead.
The Lord declined my soul to take
for reasons which remain opaque.



Consensus usually belongs to the first one who dares to ahem and summarize.



"Employees Must Wash Hands" posted in the restroom translates to
"Dine Elsewhere" even if no cockroaches are currently visible.



Need we be terribly surprised at the shortcomings of a world
that is substantially run by the personalities who dominate meetings?



Today remains our only hope for tomorrow's yesterday.



Nothing deepens character like a firmly balanced dilemma.



The corn husk will never understand the corn.



Hint to Bottom-Line CEO's

Reducing employees to digits
may cause a cessation of widgets.



To find order in chaos, stop looking there.



Everybody is said to be unique, but most people are unique in about the same way.



Even as a bud, given water, becomes a flower,
the office sycophant, given power, will become an autocrat.



For chest cold recovery, we must learn to always expectorate the unexpectated.



Leave the past behind you, but if part of it gets back in front of you, ask it why.



In truest love, giving and taking become moot.



The teeth of adversity grow directly behind the smile of fortune.



A local church begins as a fire in people's hearts,
and sometimes ends as a structure whose windows no one wants to wash.



For TV addicts, death may cause minor personality changes.



He deceived her in ways which made her feel so loved.



A newborn's first thought: "Now what?"



Adolph Hitler was reputedly the Dictatorian of his high school graduating class.



It is better to have tried and failed than never to have failed at all.



After a motivational seminar I feel like new frosting on an old cake.



During college his deepest thought never got down as far as his knees.



Morning Glory Manager

He smiled his way to power,
enjoyed his sunny hour,
then made some big boys frown
and smiled his way back down.



A politician walked up to the Pearly Gates, shook St. Peter's hand vigorously,
and announced, "God has my full support."



If you would hear the song of the infinite, listen quietly through the ends of your
toes.



He carefully hid his feeling of superiority behind a smug expression.



All of life is a near-death experience.



Choose bravely; learn deeply.



Tears are from the soul wetting its pants.



Every day is more evidence of forever.



Motherhood is hereditary. If you never had a mother,
chances are your children won't have one either.



After all I've been through, hell should be a breeze.



Dogs offer you humility, while cats invite it.



A shelf in need is a floor indeed.



Exits from the freeway of truth begin at a small angle.



Walk where your feet are.



The hell you feel is the one that's real.



Why can't we not worry by not wanting to worry?



Reality is what's left to us after all of our failures to find it.



Hell provides a room
for people who assume,
which gets some ventilation,
but my, what a population!



Kind acts never die,
and what is kind in yourself
was waiting for you.



His dark blue suit had yes written all over it.



It's easy to be critical, but it's even easier to be bureaucratic,
which is why bureaucracy is always ahead of its critics.



The caskets of beggars and vice presidents close with the same snap.



Hell is an archive of souls too interesting for heaven.



Technology offers a profusion of easier ways to live a life we don't understand.



If God had forbidden the snake too, would Adam and Eve have eaten it for dessert?



In his climb up the corporate ladder he was able to overcome all vestiges of past humility.



Senile? Not me. I can't remember the last time I forgot something.



A lottery consists of a few million poor fools chipping in to create a rich one.



God hells those who hell themselves.



Infinity is the quickest shortcut to the unknown.



People you have to interrupt so they can see your side, won't.



Nice days are more made than had.



I have my life well under control except for:

how much I eat,
how much I sleep,
what I say
what I do.



You know you're getting old when you notice that
your first name is being given to babies again.



Pessimist: looks both ways before crossing a one-way street.
Corpse: didn't.



Is this a user-friendly universe?



Computers won't ever become minds until they can cry--and mean it.



Creativity leads to crisis, which leads to creativity.



American work ethic: busy is good, frantic is excellent, and burnt-out is sublime.



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A New Beatitude

Blessed are the shrinks
who'll listen to you hollah
for just a hundred dollah
when life completely stinks.

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A New Fading of Before

Midnight will soon gift us with
a new year and mummify the old
as we hope ourselves the future.

Spots became so tight last year
that nothing less than interrupt
could calm my jangled vexation.

My body was less a trusty horse
than a kicky, gimpy, hungry mule,
and my mind, this quirky mind:

why did it need to fly and dive
and not adhere to steadiness?
and why so sometimes irritable?

Have I better to expect next year
as the clock pulls in the minutes
like a child sucking in spaghetti?

Resolutions I've tried--no luck--
I'm strong first, but later weak.
Luck I've tried, but it runs out.

This year I'm dropping formulas
in favor of heartlight and love--
not slushy, mind you, but real--

to hear a friend inside an enemy,
catch the light in the eyes, listen
into the endless layers of hurt.

On New Year's Eve I welcome
this new fading of before as it
allows a stronger shining of ever.

Night

Upside-down flowers,
are we not? With stems
rooted upward into the deep?

Your soul, a kindly conduit,
umbilicates your body
into the placental night

that is fathomless and
fully empty of
where and when.

Take away the night? Absurd.
One night minus one night
equals one night.

Afraid of night?
Dread the shadows?
Learn from them.

Shadows tell stories,
emit fragrant meanings,
take you deeper than your feet.

Especially observe inner shadows,
even if they speak no words--
hear them out, and hear them in.

Look beneath shadows--
drop through into wider shadows
and feel safe in full bewilderment.

Afraid of unknowing?
Make your peace with it,
and your days may smile.

When you know definitely,
the vast night will remind you
that you know nothing.

When you wish for powers,
the night may wisely
hold them back.

But to be still with night
may bring you as much truth
as your heart can hold.

Night wants to abide
underneath your day
while you work--

wants to
enwomb you
between days.

Let night have its way,
its gentle way--
soften into its fullness.

Night is the container
of nothing less
than everything.

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Night Light

Melancholy needs a walk,
so out I carry it at 11 p.m.
to study two universes,
out and in.

Our neighborhood is dotted with
random porch and yard lamps
lighting the way for nobody
and me.

An hour above setting in the west,
our less-than-first-quarter moon
smiles inscrutably like a queen
in state.

Gliding through the trees, she
offers only used rays to my heart,
but light being now difficult to find,
I accept.

With far-away stars shining only because
they must, above a neighborhood where
yard lamps are glowing, thanks to
owners,

a breath now washes through my chest
inviting me to turn my melancholy
over to night's infinite matrix of Beings
who shine.

I do, and return home with lungs full
of light from outer and inner space,
and from yard lamps left on for all
who walk.

Night Thoughts

Sleepless tonight inside my skin and bones,
I feel that life must be a cruel curse--
Begun with squall, cut off with pain and groans,
A little joke told by the universe.

Why am I here? What accident of fate
Breathed life into this form I occupy?
What kind of God would bother to create
A fragile human life, then let it die?

A voice within my heart says, "Mend your ways,
And light inside your consciousness will gleam.
Your bleakness, like the earth, delays dawn's rays,
But love and hope will end your desperate dream.

"Depression fills agnosticism's night,
But soon your soul must rise and follow light."

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Nine Steps to a Poem

Get born.

Have a confusing
non-fatal childhood.

Grapple with religion
and let it think it won.

Work at a job that has
nothing to do with poetry.

Be amazed at how people
can act the way they do.

Revel and fail in love x times
before a settling occurs.

Struggle with y dilemmas
and escape z threats to life.

Fail to let go of an idea
that fails to let go of you.

Hold onto your pen while
the poem writes itself.

No Darkness, No Diamonds

If life is going well,
don't write.
Know why?
'Cause you can't.

Know why?
'Cause your creativity
is all clogged up
with contentment.

Writing amidst blessings
is bleeding without wounds.

Why even read?
Blow a tin whistle
or talk to your uncle.

It's OK.
Very OK.

Nominal

Nothing got
my mother's goat
for long--
she'd settle it.

I had become far too old
to be calling her Mommy
but still was
and didn't want to
but couldn't change.

One day while practicing
my trumpet in the basement
(in deference to TV watchers)
I needed her attention
and yelled a questioning
"Hey?" up to the kitchen.

Catching my copout,
she opened the door
at the top of the stairs
and announced,
voice taut,

"My name's not Hey!
If you don't want to call me
Mommy then call me Mom."

And that settled it.
I did after that.
It was easy.

Notes on Work

Beginnings are awkward.
Continuings are strenuous.
Easy peace won't last.
Inner balance may.

Death?
Doubtful.
The graveyard's
a door to more.

Requiem aeternam?
Doubtful.
New life,
new work.

Why then work?
Stagnation stinks.
Starvation hurts.
Endings aren't.

Now, Sweet Now

When quiet has its way,
a subtle glow may grow
inside the heart's heart.

One's furnishings reflect
a different cast of light
when silence fills the room.

Consonance with core
allows a laying down
of petty weekday will.

All cells become as servants
to a Master higher than
the calls of sense and self.

True, jostlings and lacks
and irritating chores
await the coming down.

Dark evil, multiform,
may offer up its dirt,
and errors their regret,

but in this now, sweet now,
a subtle glow is growing
inside the heart's heart.

Oaks Near Town

Black and green
under sunlight
stand these aged oaks,
seasoned wisdom in wood.

"Believe, believe!"
preaches the chapel bell
from a spire in town
to the congregated trees

which, distanced from doctrine,
stand firmly unnoticed
with their branches spread wider
and trunks planted deeper

and roots drinking more serenely
of a living water holier
than even believing can ever
believe belief capable of believing.

Clanging soon ends
and relinquishes
to the forest its
sacred silence.

Old Hair

Some say
I am old
bit at least
my shadow's
hair is black.

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An Old Man's Fancy

Stepping through the front door
into vernal flowerings,
I sense a breeze of early manhood
through my body-window.

There was family then,
so much family
that we almost didn't
want that much--
now just you and I
and an occasional kiss.

There were trembling bushes
and thrilling winds.
Internal landscapes
tumbled over each other,
vying for supremacy
with surging colors.

What landscape now?
Same one as then,
only someone drained
the colors out of it.

Now, living is sensible,
good, right.
Then, it was exploding
with overfelt feelings.

Young men march
to any drummer they hear,
while old men smile
and tap on the table.

On Leaning

Some think they leaned upon a stronger will
when all that happened was this will had shone
a light beam on some girder, deep and strong,
within their own divinely buttressed soul.

Mistakenly, they felt this other will
support their own, when really, all are leaning
safe upon the same Eternal Strength
which none of us can own, but all may share.

The light beam shows it's safe to turn within.

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One Glance

From its western podium
the setting sun conducts
for half an hour
a symphony of colored sky:
loud oranges and penetrating purples
resolving into softer pinks and muted blues.

Under this musical sky,
noticing your smile and breeze-tossed hair,
I glance deep into the centuries
behind your clear eyes--
and I remember.

This moment was and is and will be.
It never was not, and never cannot be--
one precious moment of purest love,
breathless and deathless.

Inner spirit needs only one glance, no more--
no rush or embrace or kiss or promise.
One glance opens your soul to me,
and I know your soul and love your soul.

This musical sky is fleeting;
these bodies will grow old and cold;
but my memory of this one glance
will never fade, as must the sky.

Our symphonic sun's bright colors
have mellowed now to a somber gray
as we walk along
not knowing what to say.

Ones

I spot a one.
He changes lanes abruptly
right in front of me, no signal.
My teeth clench.
He is number one in his machismo,
and I a separate one in irritation.

Another one is following my car
close enough to fill my mirror.
I want to slow down
and teach him a lesson,
but instead I simmer along
as one trapped.

I notice my cozy tailgater is flying
an American flag above his window,
loyal in some kind of patriotism,
separate in some kind of jingoism,
and I explore my intolerance.

By "ones" I mean sequestered minds,
"me" people in a universe of "not me."
Ones will celebrate their personal glory
then perish into their self-created void.
Ones will say we go around just once,
done, with no later come-arounds,
so that when the gustoed body quits,
the mind joins Big Zero forever.

Why don't I think the same as that?
With not one proof that holds a drop,
I see a future human state
unhindered by me-centric rivalries.

Birthing time and time again,
evolving life by life eternally,
it seems to me we'll someday
give up being ones, and enter
fully the community of Unity
where competition isn't.

Though now I seem a one
to any other one
as the other one, for now,
may seem a one to me,
I hear an inner-speaking
Spirit say that all of us
are one with Utmost One
and separated mainly by
our walled-off minds and
pretty bags of bones.

The Only Christian

He went to church one cloudy morn,
somewhat forlorn.
He was the first one there, he guessed,
and sat to rest.
He studied all the stained-glass art;
soon church would start.
The clock swung round to half past eight--
the folks were late.
No organist was there to play,
no preacher to pray;
no choir stirred the air with song--
what could be wrong?
Twelve worn-out candles stood unlit
(this wasn't fit),
and Bibles, hymnals, all were closed
in silent rows.
A full half-hour he waited there,
then said a prayer.
He prayed that God would gird his heart
to do his part
and asked forgiveness for us all--
then felt his call.
He took his Bible from his pew,
for now he knew
the only Christian left was he;
he held God's key.
His work now would be hard and long,
but he'd be strong.
He prayed that Christ would live again
in hearts of men,
then opened wide the large front door
and stayed no more.
He stepped outside without remorse;
he knew his course.
The door through which crowds once had flocked
he left unlocked.
Then, "Wait!" he spoke out with a start,
"I'm not so smart."
Today, to his profound dismay,
was Saturday.

The Other Door

To take a perfect bolt
and start the nut awry
and twist it with a jolt
is like a lie.

To grab a kiss or touch
without her matching mood
won't gratify as much
as tasteless food.

To batter down a door
whose fault is being locked
won't satisfy us more
than having knocked.

For every door locked tight
a second unlocked door
will open with no fight
and please us more.

The one who knocks and waits,
then seeks an unlocked way,
transcends life's petty hates
and learns to pray.

Our First Warm Day

If I were to write about our first warm day of spring,

I would write about the stuttering
burglar-alarm honks of a car
two blocks away.

I would write about our waving neighbor
who slowly rides his motorcycle
out into the breeze, seeming to think
nothing of his vulnerability.

I would write about the silent force
that brings the daffodils to bloom
and emboldens secret romances.

I would write about children loudly vying
for token goals and supremacies
in outdoor made-up games.

I would write about the lush air
playing inside my chest in C-major.

I would write about Celestial Light
beaming upon all and within all
while taken for granted by most.

I would watch the setting sun,

listen to the dusk birds,

watch for the first star,

pray my drop into the Beneficent Stream
that flows within every person's heart
and every star's,

then drop into the heights
to write without a pen
upon the folds of Infinity's Cloak
about our first warm day of spring.

Out of the Black Smoke

**(First two lines
paraphrased from
The Voice of the Silence
by H. P. Blavatsky)**

Out of the black smoke
winged flames arise.
The furnace of living
refines as it destroys.

Black smoke
billows up just now
for a coming purity.
The Refiner observes
our age-long process
of combustive growth,
and patiently awaits.

Black smoke
of doubt and trial,
error and despair,
dissolves by degrees
into a clarity
and a loving
within any and all
who persevere.

Let our hearts flame up
out of the black smoke,
arise beyond pain
until pure enough to
fly to the rim of bliss
and cross into it.

Outwhere

A rocket breaking free
from Earth's gravity is,
by dint of direction,
traveling a trajectory
into outwhere.

No limit is seen
to what is outer,
but what is inner
offers with its
infinity a rainbow
and a promise.

Let rocket people
point their probing
within if they would
make discoveries.

Far-going rockets
may be today's
Tower of Babel
reaching out and up
to an imagined
material heaven while,
nearer than our nuclei,
heaven is hugging us.

Overflow

Sometimes I'm so full of good feeling
that I can't do any reading.
Nothing comes upstream.

If you are full of good feeling now,
throw this poem away.
It's a waste of time.

Write me one.

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Pain and Promise

If only it
How can I
When will this
Can I ever
Is there any
Why am I
This is too

Better is later
This shall pass
Now to learn
We are loved
Never all alone
Be in being
Endure in light

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Parting Words

I soon must leave this earth.
What would you ask
of me, young man?

*How shall I live my own life,
oh dying man?*

Live so that you energize
each day. Give some small gift
to humanity every day.
Love the child within you
every day.

*What is your way
of finding truth,
oh dying man?*

Truth is seen, not found.
You may see truth in the center
of your head as pictures
on a screen.
Truth is not the pictures,
but truth is in the seeing.
Be wary of
memory pictures,
for they fade and distort.
And observe the impermanence
of hopes and fears,
which rise and fall
like waves on an inner sea.
To see truth,
just look--now,
now,
now.

*What should I know
about love,
oh dying man?*

Love, as a word,
has been to the heights
and the depths,
so trouble yourself little
over knowing the word.
If you know the beauty
of a blooming daffodil,
the magic in a young
woman's gaze, the thrill
of seeing your first child,
then you know love.

If you give a gift to someone,
then you love--
not the gift
you buy at a store
and wrap,
but a living gift of sharing,
of nurturing
when most needed.

*May God bless you,
oh dying man.*

I now must depart,
but I shall see you again
through other eyes.

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Passing and Pausing

Do you think this lived-in "Now"
could be any more about self?
Toys and joys, thrills and kills
all decorate our deadly days.

"Now's" cousin "Then" was mayhem
aptly captured between bookends,
whereas "Will be" rides veiled on high
like cirrus clouds above the moon.

With the past a mess for certain
and the present a certain mess,
our trust must be in the future
beginning no later than here.

Passing, pausing through life and life,
caught up in matter's unloveliness,
we still need to stay and work
and be, yes be--linked in good heart
as we walk on the road into Light.

Passing Through

I'm only a guest here?

Everything provided.
Need a bed?
Have a bed.
Need an arm?
Have two.
Heart and brain?
No problem.

But what to do here?

Everything provided.
Businesses,
forests and farms,
books and libraries,
churches, holy words,
other people to
do things with.

But what to be here?

Though only a guest,
do rearrange things,
attract and repel others,
leave your mark on
a world full of
everybody's marks.

*Thank you.
I won't stay long.*

Path

One mountain to climb
One abyss to pass over
One crow cawing law

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Paths

Found in May 2012 when cleaning
out my old wallet from 1986

Each path leads to another path
And that one to a third,
And on and on path leads to path
Until the way seems blurred.

The beauty of *this* path lies in
Its trodden permanence--
It beckons us to wear it thin
While traveling whence to hence.

This path winds gently left and right
As if ignoring straight--
Perhaps its founder had no sight
Or trod it very late.

Or did he follow waves of sound
That most folks fail to hear,
Which led him up and down and round
As far-off goals came near?

How paths begin we'll never know
(The woods will never say),
But all who have a place to go
Are thankful for The Way.

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Penetration

Pierce with pointed mind through veils of falsity
Toward evanescent Truth.

Smile through hard frowns
Toward patient Joy.

Pray through frozen images
Toward warm Oneness.

Love through burning hatreds
Toward brilliant cool Light.

When Light floods the heart,
No veil can block,
No frown can discourage,
No image can conceal,
No hatred can destroy.

The proper moment is now.
The proper place is here.
The proper act is giving.
The proper feeling is love.

Permissions

From whom does your life
have its license to live?
Not from Rome or Scriptures
or fine-robed Interpreters--

not from parent or teacher,
policeman or mayor.
Your frame can be governed
but your heart heeds the One

as butterflies do
aloft in a breeze
over leaf and flower
in tune with The Will.

Enclosed please find
within you a church
never built, yet nearer
than one breath away.

Philosophy

I saw a philosopher
driving to work
at the college
in his Pontiac
Sunbird
to pick up
his biweekly
paycheck,
and I said
to myself,
"What does
this really
mean?"

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Pieces of Mind

**by Alan Harris
1994**

**Thanks are extended to the Burlington Northern Railroad
for providing the commuting time necessary for this project.**

Many who will sit inert before a TV all day will also honk in slow traffic.



Leaving a few stones unturned in a marriage or a minefield can be downright healthy.



Something about righteous people strikes one as wrongeous.



If every discarded corporate goal in America could be changed into a muffin,
world hunger might be ended.



Give a man a fish
and feed him for a day;
teach a man to fish
and he casts his life away.



Ye armies, take up golf.



God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
Later, IBM said, "Let the chips fall where they may,"
and chaos was upon the earth.



He traveled the world, carrying vast unexplored territories within.



Thrice passed along and truth goes wrong.



Plenty from Nothing

So many good deeds,
costing no one a dime,
are done by the people
who have the least time.



A society lady's best snub is no match for that of a summoned house cat.



Nobody scolds like a coward.



"I don't mind dying," the old-timer mused, "but I'm sure going to miss myself."



Epitaph

(as wished by Keith E. Harris)

Some of my advice was good, some poor.
Some was followed, some ignored.
May it be that the good advice was followed
and the poor advice was ignored.



Delayed Honor

Advanced degrees
(a waste of time?)
require a climb
on servile knees.
Who dare displease
and do the contrary
get all the honorary
Ph.D.'s.



Silence is golden, like wedding rings only much scarcer.



When I'm very ill, no fat ladies may sing at my bedside.



The first robin of spring has to eat frozen entrées.



Whoever first said "Hey, man!" was to be the most widely quoted dude in modern times.



A stitch in time saves the theory of relativity.



Too many looks spoil the betrothal.



Pep Talk to Shy Poets

Will editors request the poems
you've written for your drawer?
As well make friends by holing up
behind an armored door.



Law of Halves

Reprimands
where none are needed
make every new one
half as heeded.



People You May Know

Execudrudge

Follows paralytic procedures to the nth decree.

Maitre d'isdain

Helps you feel humble in a restaurant where you don't really belong.

Hairbabler

Gets gossip all over your new do.

Cellular phony

Attracts dates by flashing his pocket phone.

Stockbroken

Working on his third improved system.

Standup Graffitiian

Writes high comedy in the stalls.

Hell's Angler

Rides a Harley to the trout stream.

Altered Boy

Piously trades puberty for the soprano section.

Baba Bigaura

A perfected being who has to take on disciples to keep from starving.



Music is evidence that beauty, mathematics, and time all live in the same neighborhood.



Stumbling blocks make wonderful starting blocks for the next race.



Happiness may come in waves separated by generous troughs.



Jesus had quite an impact for one who apparently knew no algebra.



When you're down in the dumps, advice becomes excruciatingly abundant.



A kiss in time makes nine.



When a salesman says my name repeatedly, he is pushing a button--the eject button.



Getting your hair clipped tends to make your secrets fall out of your mouth.



Junk Class Mail

A proposed new category for most US Mail, which would be conveyed from the Post Office directly into a nearby recycling truck, offering Americans an environmentally correct savings of millions of domestic hours.



Perhaps 90% of us have been talked into doing 90% of what we have done.



Corporate Image Task Force Report

Our research shows that the best way to make our customers think they are getting what they ask for is to give them what they ask for.



Half of humanity have ego problems, while the other half are proud not to have any.



No Hog Heaven?

Might not the same bliss as the guru's Nirvana be experienced by pigs in a rotten banana?



The road to hell is littered with the manuscripts
of church sermons written late on Saturday.



To marry for happiness may end up stretching both words a little.



Businessman's Prayer

God grant me the ingenuity
to escape the things I cannot change,
money to change the things I can,
and lawyers to know the difference.



Random silences deepen a conversation and add force to an argument.



Unanimously Remorseful

Personnel in a meeting
to agreements may come,
which in each of their hearts
they know to be dumb.



Good Morning Wish

May your breakfast food nourish,
your day ahead flourish,
and your outlook on living
be never too worryish.



Well-Balanced Man

He's just as shallow as he is loud,
as incompetent as he is arrogant,
and as insecure as he is cocksure.



Lecture: a verbal dance between voice and attention,
sometimes accompanied by meaning.



Never lose more money than you can afford to lend.



Exposed

In life no law's known
to prevent hurtful words,
as in death one's gravestone
is wide open to birds.



He has a six-figure handshake.



To nurse a few grudges is forgivable if you try not to breast-feed them.



The Kindest Safe

Thieves will fail,
try as they may,
to steal any money
you've given away.



Comfort: what philosophers deride in order to somewhat achieve.



Computers have enabled business offices to move much more quickly from one emergency to the next.



Perhaps the only infallible way to detect a lie is to be the liar.



Country Song Title

You Punched a Hole in My Heart Like I Was A Train Ticket to Peoria



Didn't we think we were bad when we used to do a drive-by tooting?



The wealthy appreciate humility in others, and some even pretend to it themselves.



No bird flies freer than a skating child.



Computer Book Title

Artificial Intelligence for Dummies



A computer is a city in a box.



Find some friends you like, or be stuck with the friends who find you.

In Case of Offense

The feather of humor
may sometimes
be felt as a dagger thrust.
Humblest apologies to
any wounded reader.

--A. H., April, 1994

Planting an Apple Tree

Our green earth is turning brown
like a skinless apple
when wrapped in clear plastic.
We cough and spit our technology
into its atmosphere,
pumping it full of our pumpings,
heating it with our heatings.

We fail to hear earth wheeze
as we motor to the flea market
for our next bargain
or to the supermarket for 2% milk.
We dump our chemists' ideas
into the only air there is
and pump carbon
into our children's lungs.
Already we smell our urban halitosis
blowing back into our faces
and we make little jokes about it.

Will earthlife fade away
along with our generation?
Or will we let it breathe
the saving breath of trees?
It is too smoky to tell from here,
but I plant this apple tree
in case earth heals one day
and some new Newton needs
a lump on the head.

Plowhorse

My horse and I are brothers,
and the morning sun knows why.

Within my horse resides
a soul, I'm pretty sure--
more wisdom than just to strain
and turn brown fields to black.

I'd guess this horse was human
in ages before the Ice,
but now for some dim reason
is sentenced to the plow.

Service, a horse's essence,
had best be, too, my own
as we pull such plows as matter
into ages still to come.

My horse and I are brothers
and the morning sun knows why.

Poetic License

Bearer is
guaranteed
the freedom
to write anything at
all
or nothing at all,
in any form or no
form,
in any color,
at any angle,
on any subject
or no subject,
using words
real or coined.

Bearer must endure
all consequences
of said writing,
for this is how it is.

Poetry Poem

Awfully many poems these days
seem chains of syntactical screams
with metaphors careening on two wheels
and coy diction that raises its hand
and says "I said that!"

Some poems are easily read like
the smile of a friend you are visiting
who sits you down on a clean couch
with a peanut butter cookie and
makes you feel warm inside
with talk and apple cider.

Darker poems
can insinuate
somewhere below
your belt with
startling obscurity
or grab greasily
at your possibilities.

Kinds and kinds of poems
spring to being
like sparks from a grindstone
that sharpens inner tools.

Poets tell lies that are
deeper than truth,
and refuse to quit writing
all over the world's wall.

How is a poem written?
Find one inside
and watch.

Prayer for 2000

Undecimated by a new thousand (flow flows on),
abruptly we in 2000 seem to be where
we've always been (and busily been),
still wishing for a wish (still praying for a prayer)
to make our earthlife right (or righter).

Were we to dip silently (each) into a minute (untimed),
we could scarcely come up unwashed (unchanged)
by (I falter at "Your" for dualism) some
transcendent gentle rightness (grace)
guiding our souls like boats (adrift in when)
into a nowness found just below now.

I would pray (if I prayed, and I do)
from within most central us (where one is allish)
for easings where we grasp (egolike)
and gentlings where we (too quickly) scold.

Feeling safe and strong in softest You,
inexplicable Lord most high (most deep),
with Light never seen (Force never unfelt),
I pray and pray (and somehow always pray).

Prayer in Brief

I bow
with heart in hand
to offer up my life
for larger Life, for brighter Light,
for Joy.

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Prayer of Being

Oh Nameless One,
if I, as I, am not
meant to be,
then how could I
sit here writing
a prayer of thanks
for my being and
for the far reach
I am from dust?

My prayer only asks
that, to the sea of
goodness that I feel
all around me, I might
be allowed to add
my anonymous drop.

Today you overwhelm
my most lovingness
by how strangely deep
you go into, through,
and around me.

Waitingly, doingly,
goingly, searchingly,
my heart offers back
to its Source a hum that
sounds as much like a
Bach Prelude as an OM.

Amen

Prayer of Unknowing

O Lord, I don't know
what "O" and "Lord" mean,
nor do I know what words
to silently say
into your holy ear
(if any ear at all is hearing),
nor do I seem to receive replies,

and yet I feel in my deeper
inside places (which have no places)
that, as I'm fumbling for words
and stumbling within my soul,
a prayer is somehow praying me
and giving amen to my life.
Uncomprehending, Lord,
I drop my words.
Amen.

Preparing the Colors

Blend faith with impossible
for an enlightened off-white.

A yesbeam can brighten doubt
when droll is mixed lightly in.

Ego turns a palette all black--
speckle this with stars of give.

Gold turns gold into more gold
leaving little breath for seeing.

Painting a ceiling invisible
makes the room rollick with sky.

Where find invisible paint?
Be liberal with stars of give.

Pressure

In a house where Usually prevails,
where Always-used-to guides,
where What-other-people-think
and Never-been-done-before deter,

a cork may pop one day up
out of a pressurized bottle
to let wine spray the ceiling
just
in case novelty might be okay.

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Procession

Metaphysical
stairway to inner summits:
reincarnation

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The Prophet

Our city's wild-haired prophet
Stumbled through the gutter
Of our subtle street
Crying:

God is being killed,
Murdered by a stoneman's hand-ax.
Giddy chaos overwhelms his brain;
Head-blood gushes down his face,
Gurgles in his throat.
He tears his chest
With dying fingernails.
I see him falling to the nadir
of neurotic nothingness.
God is dead;
Mourn, man.

Our prophet staggered on
With timely steps until
His voice was out of range
Again.

Purchase

Tried to buy the Sun
paying installments each day
until it owned me.

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Questions for Making a Decision

1. What is my primary motive as I make this decision?
2. Will my decision cause benefits beyond myself and promote a wider good?
3. Will my course of action unnecessarily diminish or hurt any person or group?
4. Will the consequences of my decision be long-term or temporary?
5. Will I be turning over control of my life to another person or agency?
6. Will I be able to have the necessities of life?
7. What sacrifices will I need to make, and what benefits outweigh these sacrifices?
8. Whose strong influence am I feeling upon my decision, and shall I allow that?
9. What is the worst result my decision can bring, and can I accept that?
10. What safety net will I have if nothing goes as planned?
11. Will high risk be offset by potential growth and deepening?
12. When am I going to stop thinking about this decision and do something?

Quiet

When every somewhere
falls away and all
nowheres turn into
the main everywhere--
where is there then
to go but quiet
into here?

When love turns
to sand without
any other in view
and nobody cares
except groanings
of self--
might quiet
no thinking
deep breathing be
salve enough
to allow tomorrow?

When demands on
time money time love
time patience time
agonize the brain
choke all muscles
as deadlines approach
like freight trains
honk-honking beware
of broken futures
at whatever is you--
does a chair
still exist in
a quiet room
for a fortunate
sitting--
does air
still surround
for a breathing--
does the quiet
beneath all crash
of all brain
embrace you
for as long
for as long
for as long?

Railing West

Out through my train's
dirty window I see
the clear yellow sun
sliding its way
down into stardom.

A sudden stand
of trees whisking by
allows water to gleam up
from between their trunks,
still as the reflected sky.

Suburban homes
too new for trees
swiftly turn
like fashion models
on a stage.

Dusk is now underway
with this ambivalent sky,
neither gray nor blue,
tempting my train
westward into nightfall.

Sinking like an
orange lollipop,
the sun is being
licked away fast
from underneath
by tomorrow.

I have lived long enough
to have respect for tomorrow.

I have one sun only,
and only one tomorrow.
I wait and wait
for tomorrow until
it's all I am.

Random Thoughts

A human is a handshake between spirit and matter.



If faith can move mountains, just imagine what knowledge can do.



A magnet can convert a piece of steel into another magnet,
but what made the magnet a magnet?



If we could just trust the universe to know what it is doing,
we would have more joy and less fear.



Money is the essence of matter; it never leaves the earth.



The universe is a great magnet teaching us little pins to act like it.



A loving thought is as deep as the night sky.



The "Great Books of the Western World" are like newspapers next to the Book of
Life.



When wealth speaks, greed listens.



Computers can be mirrors in which we admire our minds and forget our souls.



We crawl through life like caterpillars, fearing the final cocoon that alone leads
to freedom and glory.

Reality

Down, down a humming spiral I float
to an undark land that lies about me among unshadows.
I reach out a hand that I don't have, to grope, to touch,
and I feel nothing but soft everything.

Without ears I hear the soft multi-mumblehum
of a misty shore stretching into windless, waveless, waterless distance
where the surf pounds once every eon in a grand, spray-filled creation
within whose star-foam we humanly manifest.

Here I feel the peaceful pulse of Most Inner Underatom
beaming benevolence up through the tree that is we
and feeding our Adam-atoms a feast
of electric apples that never touch the ground.

I see every-you around me and in me.
Here is where you-I find sustenance beyond all paychecks.
Notice this gentle light from no visible sun.
Look at that tiny root leading upwards to a budding planet.

Rising up the humming spiral again, I hear little taps
of what most people call reality.
It is raining on the roof
and the cat needs to be fed.

Recourse

All roads out are blocked
by this rockslide in your mind?
All roads in await.

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Release from the Known

Where did we meet?
Where before have I seen
your steadfast resilience?
In the snow on a mountain?
Have I seen your eyes
in churning blues of seawater?
Has your voice laughed
in the rain on some porch roof?
My knowing fails.

Being with you
is so far beyond and above
knowing
that I gasp at the depth,
as if I were to emerge
out of a challenging forest
and stand surprised
at the brink
of some Grand Canyon,
the fragrance of familiar evergreens
pouring over the edge
into this optical impossibility.

In school we learned hard and long,
hoping to know our way into a future,
but now an approaching endlessness
is vaporizing
every drop of knowing
we ever gleaned
and sweeping us away
in the singing wind.

However unknowing,
we can do,
we can feel,
we can think,
we can be,
and we can
(most yes of all)
love.

A being is fullest of can
when emptiest of know.
Witness the majestic power of weather
around our deeply unknowing globe,
or feel within all your organs
the fathomless tides fluctuating
under lunar and solar urgings.

Breathe, breathe with me,
my sweet companion,
as we sally confidently
into a smiling unknown.

Relief in Relife

Does evening raise a fear of no more dawns?
Does autumn's chill forever kill our lawns?
If not, then why dread gray hair in a mirror?
If dawns and lawns recur, is death to fear?

Is body all I am, a soft robot
conditioned by blind chance, then left to rot?
Is heaven just a slide shone on the sky
to keep believers honest till they die?

To think extinction ends our too-short life--
to think a void replaces child and wife--
to think a shroud blanks out all consciousness--
all far too grim for me, I must confess.

I'm reassured from deep in bone and heart
that when I and my body come to part,
I'll slip it off and leave it like a coat,
retaining what I know, but free to float.

Our breath comes in, goes out, and so do we
who end each earthly life, but then are free
to roam bright inner realms with opened eyes
which see through physicality's bleak lies.

We thrive in heaven's symphony of mind
uncounted blissful years, until we find
we thirst again to join the physical
where atoms quickly teach what's practical.

Like gravity, a pull of destiny
reels in our soul from near infinity
and helps us choose as home some mother's womb--
what most call birth, our trammeled soul deems tomb.

Then choice and aftermath on earth are learned--
like school, where each promotion must be earned.
With open-hearted deeds we all progress;
with selfish acts we duly retrogress.

If death is no more end than western sun--
if Soul appears through bodies, one by one--
then life is no more opposite of death
than breathing is the opposite of breath.

Remembrance

Remembering tells me
I was never not, nor
were you nor anyone.

Arteries in the Cosmos
are pulsing with light
and life and love

in a flow never ceasing
yet constantly changing
in form and expression.

Peace it is to remember
these arteries that feed
from out of the Unseen,

their pulsings uncountable,
their inner motions subtler
than any evening breeze.

Remembering upward
and inward, how not feel
vitality from the One?

I remember (don't you?)
the beauty within trust,
the safety of community,

the triumph of cooperation,
the brave sureness of joy,
love as easy to find as air.

Remembering as I do
and perhaps as you do,
how could one not return?

Restaurant Miff

An old couple,
both over 80,
look at menus.
He mumbles.

She scolds, "Oh,
you're always
disappointed."

Argument now....

An argument
60 years bitter--
stern faces,
trembling hands.

How many lifetimes
will they require
to smile, care, give,
feel smoother?

Love is nearer
to them than the
germ of an instant,
yet they fight on for
fleeting rightness.

Old antipathies
butt their heads,
bam bam bam,
straining old hearts
that do well just
to find their next
beat.

A Retreat Ahead

Here's to Blaine and Jean Harker, those lovable two,
with joy so contagious and counseling so true.
A mourner in grief is a magnet to Jean,
since few are the pains she's not suffered or seen.

At the parties they give there is greatness of table,
and every last diner eats more than he's able.
Jean's food pantry likewise, for the hungry and poor,
was much like her heart--a wide open door.

Their lives are committed to lifting the fallen,
through talkin' and workin' and sweatin' and bawlin'.
An unspoken concern here is needful of saying--
for Jean's own self-healing we are fervently praying.

While Blaine may have yet to get milk from a cow,
in spite of the Amish folks showing him how,
he's mastered the art of infectious laughter
that shatters the silence from floor-joist to rafter.

They've moved to the country near Old Shipshewana,
but they can't quite move in yet, as much as they wanna--
while waiting for lodgers to kindly dislodge
they have set up their home in a large upper garage.

We honor the Harkers today, Blaine and Jean,
and the Power behind them, so strong yet unseen.
May God bless their home, the retreat of their dreams,
granting laughter which heals, and the grace which redeems.

Ride

Commuter train bears
between the wavy irons
most precious cargo.

Passengers talking,
sleeping, reading newspapers,
eighty miles per hour.

Unique life stories
glowing within these bodies
filing toward sunset.

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River Pair

We spend a few sunlit minutes by the river
between wafting willows above
and the sea-bound twinkling current below,
watching two ducks quack and dive for food.

We have learned to be quiet,
letting the silent breeze of love
sway us together in spirit
like these oscillating cattails near the bank.

Younger, we captured each other swimming
in a marriageward current of living water,
not knowing quite who we were
nor where we were bound.

Older, we have danced a lively jig,
stubbed a toe, raised a child,
blindly hurt each other,
healed each other's wounds.

As we sit here and mirror the present
to each other in quaint communion,
gazing at two ducks gliding downstream,
there is nothing at all to say or do.

Rolling with the Thunder

Why I was angry matters not,
but fury had blossomed in me,
and I *was* it--no turning away.

Fingers atremble,
voice ashake,
heart apump,
I challenged a present wrong
yielded up to me
from some chasm of an obscure past.
I stood resiliently firm,
arteries turgid with love and law.

It is over, and I did not lose.
No one lost--or won.
The conflict was as imperative
and brief
as a summer thunderstorm.

I sit now electric with leftover adrenaline,
images of the struggle
reverberating in my thoughts--
but already a silence in my blood begins
to bathe me with merciful forgetting.

Rose Cross

I survey this rose,
seeing into its center,
in and in
to a divinity fed by rainwater
and sparkled by sunfire.

Never was this rose
merely a pretty flower.
It blooms big in the center
of the Cosmic Cross,
bathed in blood-red tones.

The center of the Cross
and the center of the Rose,
conjoining,
reveal and conceal
the Crux of Creation.

Was there in our universe
a big bang
with no one
in the forest to hear it?
Were there thorns
before there was a rose?
A cross before there were saviors?

Look into the center of this rose,
dizzily down into
the center of your head,
for the source of the big bang.

Search into the cross's crux;
drill into the core
of your own hurting heart
to find a blazing forth
of eternity's splendid light.

Now take this rose,
this cross.
Hold them dear until
the next big bang,
which no one will hear
either.

We will know each other
then as now,
for we will say a secret word,
which is _____.
Remember?

Roses

If only one rose
ever in history
were seen to bloom,
what awe might be!

Now people yawn
at roses by dozens,
pretty weeds to eyes
that won't see.

If we but knew
we're each a rose
asleep in a bud,
might bloom we?

Safe

I have floated like a maple leaf
to the sky below an autumn pond,
to an inner place of rich relief
from gusty winds now slipped beyond.

I sense eternal love from high
(or is it deep?) inside my being,
and find this view before my eye
requires a lighter, wider seeing.

Odd now, the fear those final sighs
would turn out all my lights within,
when light now brings these newer eyes
envisionings of friends and kin.

Since here I live within a force
that moves me anywhere I ask it,
let no one feel the least remorse
upon the closing of my casket.

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Sanctuary Cove

Tucson, Arizona

Here is a chapel
simple enough
to welcome all creeds,
all vegetation,
all birds,
all humans.

People of vision built it up
out of stone to serve souls
upon this quiet foothill
near Safford Peak.

Visitors come for prayer
or meditation or escape
or inner alignment
and enter into its peace.

Not a myth, this place--
mortared local stone,
cactus needles fully sharp,
red earth of ancient lava.

When outer living has led
to a thirst for contemplation,
a path leads you to the door.

Walk in. Adjust your eyes.
Choose a bench for sitting.
Beliefs fade into Silence
opening into Mystery
as doves out on the roof
are cooing a knowing
that you lost long ago.

Santa's Interior Monologue

Boy, it's dark.
Sure is cold.
Housetop--whoa, boys!
Got the bag.
Suck it in.
Down the chimney.
There's the tree.
Gifts out of bag.
Stockings are here.
Stuff 'em.
Eat the cookies.
Drink the milk.
Wink.
Suck it in.
Up the chimney.
Ready, boys--away!
Sure is cold.
Boy, it's dark.

(Repeat a billion times.)

Saturday Walk

I am nothing. I walk my
fleshy shell along the street,
seeing the squirrels at play and
hearing the early spring birds.

No, I am not invisible yet.
This body has size and mass
and cruises well on automatic pilot.
Any bird that cares can see me.

But the breeze whistles in my ears
as if I were hollow, and that's how
I feel--ecstatically hollow--
here for now, but empty of place.

I **am** the neighborhood today--
I am the sidewalk, the bare but
budding trees. I am the children
on bicycles and skateboards.

No iota in me stops
or diverts the fresh flowing of life.
The sun shines straight through me,
and I like the cool feeling inside.

Monday in the office
I will be something again.
I will have a title and a salary
and a desk and a boss.

Mondays must perhaps be.
Deadlines, crises,
meetings, phone calls--
all these may have their place.

But walking now outdoors,
I drift along free and empty.
Nothing can touch me
when I am nothing.

The Scrooge before Christmas

Yes, there is a Scrooge. He haunts the hearts of those who wish that Santa's \$10.00 white beard were real--who wish that his "Ho, ho, ho" meant more than the \$6.00 an hour he is paid to utter it. Scrooge-inhabited people desperately long for a "Ho, ho, ho" from deep within a genuine person's heart.

We seem to want people, all people, to be genuine, yet most people have personality owies that deflect them away from thoroughly genuine behavior. Christmas would ideally be a time when all of those owies would get better, but through some quirk of human nature, they usually get worse. The showy get showier, the stingy get stingier, the drinking get drunker, the overeating get overweighted, and the busy get busier.

Considering the above, "Christmas" would seem a mockery when we consider that two-thirds of the word is "Christ". Perhaps those of Scroogish persuasion would prefer to spell it "Christmess".

Scroogish people are not the only ones who clamor for change. Certain religious types are annually haranguing each other about the True Meaning of Christmas. These frustrated (and sometimes ultraholy) people don't usually identify at all with Scrooge, but they, too, hate the tinsel, the tawdriness, and (other people's) hypocrisy. They want everyone to concentrate on the Christ child, the angels, the star, and other symbols which provided comfortable myths and icons to live by during their childhood. They tend to cling to these warm, fuzzy concepts the more tightly as they find themselves struggling with the bottomless mysteries of relationships, emotions, illnesses, and the Big Unmentionable. These bewildered adults cry out for something more stable, something safer, something holier, and something that makes sense when life doesn't.

Scroogeness could be defined as a thin layer of rage masking a desperate search for sincerity beneath. The Scrooge in our hearts knows the difference between the Jesus and the junk. Scrooge is the skeptic who dares to call tinsel tinsel, the seemingly cruel man who eschews sentimentality. Scrooge dares to drill down deeper than the reindeer manure, down into his past hurts and heartaches, down to the deepest gnarled roots that tap into his tortured soul. No, he does not like Christmas, nor does he especially like himself, but in digging deeply, he discovers a little child in there who can scarcely breathe. He sees that the "Bah" in "Bah, humbug" has all along been a crying out for breath and life and truth and goodness. Humbug has been smothering this little child for most of its life.

Long live the Scrooge within us, for deep within this Scrooge is the holy child who began life in a stable full of smelly stuff, and in whose innocent heart shimmers a true light which will dissolve the false lights and shams.

The Christ, then, may be said to inhabit Scrooge and you and me. Even though our whole land be filled with tinsel, Scrooge and you and I may discover that tinsel is an improvement over the smelly stuff in the stable. Through this child's eyes we may even see a light which we might call, for lack of a better word, a star.

Seed Thoughts

Part 1: Genesis

Seven soft planets
bloom on the trellis of space
like sunlit roses.

Budding daffodil,
yellow universe in birth,
flows deeply toward light.

Forest dawn reveals
acres of acorns dormant
beneath parent oaks.

Virgin mountain bears
seven bouquets of roses
under Father Sky.

Fohat plants a tree
of apples laden with seeds
to orchard an earth.

Breeze of Creation
swirls sparks from sleeping embers;
monads dance alive.

Seven pearls glisten,
lucid on a stringless string,
linking space with space.

Part 2: Activity

Brooding dove in nest
warms empty eggs to fullness,
cooing compassion.

Honeybees from hives,
inhaling sublime nectar,
breathe sweet hexagons.

Colony of ants,
thoughts darting, busy, working--
mind in miniature.

Moon-struck timber wolves
howl their mantras mournfully
from far-off mountains.

Caged lion pacing,
fretful of the iron bars,
under silent sun.

Midnight crickets sing
in synchronous symphony
to unknown baton.

Spider in moonlight,
spinning fragile microcosm,
reflects Reflection.

Part 3: Consummation

Orb of eye twinkling
with golden glint of grandness--
spark becoming star.

Pool-reflected Self,
diffused by breeze-churned ripples,
returns to deep calm.

Mountaintop vision
reveals a whispering valley
where all is in place.

Mind relaxing walls,
manyness softly merging
until one dream dreams.

Ark of human souls,
riding silent in dark waves,
bound for Pralaya.

Black night sky, speckled
with blazing bonfires of gods,
murmurs cosmic OM.

Voice of the Silence,
throbbing through hushed city night,
chanting "Peace, peace, peace...."

seeing you

when I look you
in the eye I find
history and mystery
not to be known
even as your own eye
presses me like a white
daytime moon nudging
soft against an open sky
right in front of outer space
leading to everything else
that flies and falls including
any flying-falling maple seed to bring
an unfoldment of up and down
(now don't the sprawling-upward limbs
and thirsty spreading-downward roots
trace out a delicate explosion so slow
so sweet that the tree has to yes die
to go bare
to fall
to rot
to sleep
to have been all of
what a tree is
all of?)
but how I look at you
my very alter-life
is as moon over healthy tree
at play in sunlight
in behind your eye
behind your inner eye
behind the innerness of your inner eye
behind even behindness
all the way back to
here I am across a table
from your most amazing being
wondering if you see
what journey is behind me
all the way to here

Seeking

Knock—but look around—
you are already inside—
no need for the door.

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Seeking until Found

There is a footless path,
a carless road,
a planeless flight
to a placeless mountain
within.

When focused on our outer joys
we seek after things that weigh or thrill,
we dignify the use of force,
we laud coarse lucre with our hopes.
Seeking without, we remain without.

If we but listen quietly
for the call to an inner mountain state,
we find that our souls are known and loved
by a subtle shepherd grooming us
to serve and build, to sow and reap.

Knowing our knownness,
we may find our foundness.

Sensing a Future

In this shaky world
where up and down
are definitely known
but gravitation still
poses big perplexities
we'd sometimes like
to shake off atoms
and take a guided
tour of the possible
and if such a ride
were available for
a dollar or a million
we'd buy a ticket
but since no booth
sells these tickets
we continue with
our work yet vaguely
sense this ride is
going to happen
sometime because
we see clearings and
glimpses especially
when mind and air
are perfectly quiet
and love is flowing
up and down and
all through our being
as if red lights were at
some railroad crossing
flashing to announce
an unseen movement
much grander than
anything stoppable

Sentence

Back of our house
a lovable stray pooch,
young and off-white
with random black
Mendelian punctuation,
darts about and sniffs grassy clumps
until, eyeing a soggy tennis ball
wedged under the neighbor's fence,
she plucks it up in her teeth
and prances puppylike for attention
as if mankind needs to please play ball
(has she romped with children
before being dumped out of
their father's midnight-slinking car?),
seeming ignorant or heedless
that ball is not played
where she is going to go--
by way of famishing jaunts
through shrubby neighborhoods,
altercations with kept cats
and with collared mutts,
a trusting ride
in the dogcatcher's van,
and a meager feast or two
before the period
at the end
of her
sentence.



September Fade

Sooner sunsets now--
flowers have gone part-petaled--
white of hair, I mull.

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Sharing Copedom

How do you cope with nopes, with fallen hopes,
with must-haves that go poof in the night?
Do you glum out and turn numb?
I do, for a while. Join me.

How can you know what you don't know?
You need answers, but all you hear is
the inside of your head. Do you worry?
I do, for a while. Join me.

Is happiness just beyond the next locked gate,
and no one around with key or hammer?
Do you fantasize with fruitless wishing?
I do, for a while. Join me.

When trouble somehow dissolves from notice
and leaves you breathing free again,
do you smile a breath of thank you into the One?
I do, for a while. Join me.

Shopping Cheap

Empty-feeling in this full-discount store,
I notice others trancing by, glaze-eyed,
behind their clinking lop-wheeled carts.
Lured, are they, by the hook of free?
Hypnotized by the hype of cheap?
I wander hapless and mapless
through thingful, clerkless aisles
and chafe inside at where things aren't.

PA speakers storewide
announce who-cares specials,
demand urgent price checks,
summon somebodies to the front, then
resume happy snippets of syrupy sambas.

Ah! A rare tagged *homo employus*--
I'll catch him and be out of here.
"Where are the reading glasses?" I ask
his back before he can escape.

He gives robotic directions to Aisle 5,
cinched with a "Can't miss 'em."

Remember when store clerks
would ask if they could help you,
and lead you to your product,
then stick around to make sure
it was really what you needed?

Remember customers? Service?

Within this barn of bargains
harried service-counter girls refund
to waiting lines for slipshod quality,
murmuring memorized apologies
to jaded ears, then "Step up, please."

Remember quality? Cordiality?

Absent is any quality counter
to make up for poor service
at the service counter.

Employees hired here
for ho-hum per hour
evade frazzled shoppers who,
from all different wealths,
squander the numbered
heartbeats of their lives
to search for bargains
planted cleverly near
high-margin impulse racks.

Remember joy? Hilarity?

Blindly, the free market (an
oxymoron to the credit-card poor)
ratchets money up to our
finely-computered investors
who downwardly squeeze
more work for equal pay
out of fewer desperates who
hate the jobs they have
which earn the scratch they need
to take out bigger loans.

Remember philanthropy? Altruism?

No reading glasses found in Aisle 5.
Did miss 'em.

Aimless now in Aisle 7,
I stop my cart to ask within:
How might people market goods
with love instead of greed?
Is selfishness the ultimate?

As if an angel had the mike,
the PA system broadcasts
"Follow the blue light..",
crackles, and goes silent.

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Short & Sour

An ounce of silence is worth a pound full of dogs.

For later flowers, if we but endure,
Misfortune makes a good manure.

He seemed warm and open, sort of like an armpit.

Thanksgiving Blessing

Thank you, Lord, for what we've got.
The turkey's dead and we are not.

Loudest laughter may snarl after.

To retain his professorship, he published a cemetery of dead ideas with footnotes for headstones.

Infatuation: love so intense, beautiful, and brief as to be unachievable by the secure.

If thine eye offend thee, pluck out the plug on thy TV.

Quack?

A New Age healer
may improve on your luck,
but listen well
to your inner duck.

A sperm can find an egg quicker than you can find your slippers.

She sued the mirror for visual abuse, and a lenient judge upheld it.

Exec

His expensive suit, his teeth so flossy,
His wrong decisions at his desk so glossy,
His colorful charts less gainy than lossy--
Could it be that he is a lousy bossy?

Base: what businessmen are always touching and covering.

Dysfunctional family: a discontented container containing the uncontainable.

Mountain: a failure of air to occupy a high altitude.

Calendar: a device for scheduling the unpredictable.

Television: square thing in the corner that sucks in brains and spits out giggles.

Every Christmas the uninformed buy the unnecessary for the ungrateful.

The spouse who loved the caterpillar may hate the butterfly.

There's something about food that rubs off in you.

Behind his smile, agendas.

Infra-babble: what meditators hear sometimes, deep inside.

Higher education trains the mind to feel good later by making it feel terrible now.

Overachievers start out restless with a heart of worms, and may end up friendless with a heart of snakes.

What If?

What if scant truth be known,
And no disciples knew this?
Their gurus they'd enthrone,
Who'd smile and let them do this.

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Silent Exchange

Settling down to meditate
in my book-lined alcove,
I gaze at Buddha on the shelf,
sitting palms up, cross-legged, calm.
What is he? Where is his mind?

Deep oceans roll between us,
the Buddha and me,
even though his cast iron likeness
is solidly planted before my eyes
among amethysts and books.

His sloping shoulders and benign face
reveal a radiant humility
surely possible to humanity,
yet seldom found in bodily beings.

Where is your mind, Lord Buddha?

Your focus seems a thousand miles within
as you meditate here
in silent serenity.

May I somehow join your journey?
What must I do to walk your path?

A sunbeam shines now
through the nearby window
and rests on Buddha's heart.

"Look within," he whispers innerly.

"Look within for a pattern of being
that will respond to your aspirations.
Consciousness is supple and supportive
if you discover and respect its laws.

"Bliss abides in every inch of space,
and will be found hidden in the obvious.

"Master nature by obeying her perfectly.
Examine her ways, ask her secrets,
and use her for the benefit of all.
Blessings accrue to the workman
who skillfully unfolds a subtle pattern,
then shapes from it a living temple to truth.

"You live in the pattern
and the pattern lives in you,
as the flower hides a seed
and the seed hides a flower.

"Proceed now into your peace,
into your meditation.
Leave my sunlit statue here
and turn to your inner light.

"Slip softly into the shining sea
of possibilities,
releasing love into life
as life releases you into love.

"I will be here when you return."

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Siren

A siren in the summer distance
wails poignantly up and down,
growing nearer and louder
before fading away beyond hearing.

Was it a policeman chasing a speeder?
An old man rushing in an ambulance
toward his last broken breath?
A fire brigade hurtling toward heat?

Sitting in a lawn chair by my driveway,
I offer a moment of silence to the siren
and to whom it has singled out
for justice or help or death.

"Who was it?" I ask the evening sky.
No reply--no sound now
but a breeze rising in the maple trees
and a low howling from the neighbor's dog.

Who, indeed, was it? Someone I know?
My best friend? My relative? My neighbor?
Will I find the answer
in tomorrow's newspaper?

The mystery of anonymous tragedy
grips my soul like a magnet.
A siren seems to drill a hole in my heart
to let love flow out to the victim.

In the wailing of a siren I hear
an anthropomorphic moan of failure,
a human weakness confronting a greater law
in tooth-gnashing agony.

Sirens will wail on for humanity of the future.
Speeders may give up or escape,
old gasping men may live or die,
fires may burn or be quenched--

but when a siren splits the air, I turn within
to nurse a pang within my own heart.
As with the tolling of John Donne's bell,
the siren wails for me.

Some Kind of Haiku

Some kind of haiku
that ignores authorities
lies here in the grass.

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Song of the Sick Minstrel

The winter night droops down
Around the scratchy trees,
Tinkled by an icy breeze,
Snapping.

Let's stand beside this creaking tree
And watch the bold eclipse
Devour the midnight sun
As if it were a yellow wafer,
Crisp and cold.

At full eclipse,
Then shall I love you,
In snapping cold,
Beneath a moon-dark tree.

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A Sonnet to Igor Stravinsky

Stravinsky's measured steps--halting by A
cross an autumn-browning field of sound--
accent his humming of tomorrow's hymn on
yesterday's three-octave voice of string.
He ran away from sentimental ground to wA
r against its farmers on a dim internal B
attleground, and thence each spring has F
ound him planting in new five-row fields.

When blackbirds mimic from the field's ri
m parading red and yellow on each wing (F
or innovation raises greener yields), he
styles himself Beelzebub in brown. Acros
s the breeze Stravinsky halts by--his gro
und will soak the blood of birds that diE.

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The Sound of Dying

If you have heard
a train go by,
you know the sound
of dying.

A buzz, a roar,
and no more.

Oh, maybe a little clacking
in the distance,
but nothing to
speak of.

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Spared for Seed

**by Alan Harris
1988**

**This book is meant for anyone
who likes his reading brief and fun.
Some phrase implanted like a seed
may bear fruit in a time of need.**

The bad news is that you are the slave of your past.
The good news is that you are the master of your future.



Weak isn't wrong,
but meek is strong.



A loving thought is deeper than the night sky.



Heaven, earth, and hell are three radio stations playing
inside you all the time, and your mind automatically tunes
in the station that resonates most closely with the quality
of your thoughts.



You can lead a friend to church,
but you can't make him pray.



Why impose virtue on someone else? Everyone needs to
decide upon virtuous action from within, either from

deepening insight or from reaction to the painful pressures caused by selfish action.



Love of looks
is love with hooks.



In brotherhood,
the group is the good.
The brother matters
and never his hood.



Give and live; keep and weep.



When light is shining within, no darkness from without
can penetrate it.



We pay for our comforts
while hardships come free,
but our hardships pay debts
that we no longer see.



We spend our first forty years making mistakes, and our
next forty years making more mistakes.



A man who lends
has many friends,

but he who shares
has fewer cares.



Rainbows are around us all the time, but it may take a
very dark cloud to make them appear.



Perhaps God does things *through* us, not *to* us, and only
when we ignorantly choose to restrict His natural flow
through our being does it *appear* that God is doing bad
things to us.



Friends bend where fakes break.



No teacher can give us anything not already inside us. He
only helps us rearrange random intuitions and thoughts
into a more orderly pattern.



A man of schools
can learn God's rules
and do well as a preacher,
but daily life,
with all its strife,
makes everyone a teacher.



Moderation in all things, including moderation.



Next to the Book of Life, even our "Great Books of the Western World" read like newspapers.



The shallower the brook, the more it babbles.



One wonders whether, if philosophers were banished from the world, life wouldn't go on pretty much as usual.



We cannot really break the laws of the universe, but if we ignore them, they will break us. That's one way we learn them. Another way is to pay close attention to what happens to others when they ignore those laws.



A kindly word soars like a bird.



Millions of inspiring books are not yet on paper. They are still exactly where they need to be.



Ride lightly in the saddle, and don't give the horse rotten oats.



If life gives us a load,
a great honor's bestowed.
Life knows, if we don't,
that we can when we won't.



What we plant, we eat.



If we only have enough presence of mind to reach out,
someone will put just the right thing into our hand.



An oft-spurned bridesmaid asked her bride
what marriage hints she could provide.
The bride quipped, "Better men hate pride,
and lipsticked frowns are magnified."



Heaven's mansions are prefabbed on earth.



Many go about like fortresses, weighted down by the very
walls they hope will protect them from others.



Shepherd thyself, else let the flock be.



We each play our instrument in the orchestra of
humanity. To worry about who's playing first chair is to
play our own part less well. If the first chair players were
the only ones playing, the orchestra of humanity would
sound awfully thin.



Some force, like a magnet
that cannot be spurned,
ever brings us those lessons
which haven't been learned.



An ounce of good will is worth a pound of prevention.



The bread of life,
however small,
must be fully eaten,
crust and all.

To feed on the best
and leave the rest
will fatten your tummy
and burst your vest.



Does battle blood's flow
make our wounded world grow?



Think late, suffer soon.



To pray for pay
is to lose the way.



A tear or a fear is a call to us all.



We can look beyond our noses and think beyond our brains.



We're indebted to our difficult acquaintances because they can teach us so much, and since our enemies push us to our limits, they're our best friends.



Where would humanity be without dirty hands?



Fulfill and be fulfilled.



Tell him some truth he didn't know he knew and gain a friend forever.



Magnets change pins; pains change people.



Work, and the world works with you. Shirk, and the world ignores you.



Silence is the purest speech.



He hated all who hate, and became a reformer. What was the net gain?



Wouldn't heaven be a terrible clutter if we could take it all with us?



Bears hibernate in their caves, people in their prejudices.



Even the best writing is a feeble substitute for action.



Sometimes we get an urge to do some great thing, and we'd really do it if someone could just tell us what it is.



If such great people have labored so diligently for so long, why is there still so much more to do?



Pity with care. Poverty may have all it wants.



Experience, like a good lecturer, repeats itself patiently to emphasize the lessons we most need to learn.



Until we understand silence, we only partially understand words.



Our deepest wound may heal to become our greatest strength.



Give a man what he *really* needs, and he may throw it back in your face.



Voice your choice,
make your break,
work your quirk,
reap your heap.
Pay your way,
stash your cash,
gain your cane,
sleep your sleep.



Will our educators ever forget units and teach unity?



Our educational system gives the children nice answers long before they care about the questions.



If you want his money,
just call him "Honey."

To win his esteem,
share in his dream.



Many folks devote a whole lifetime to the goal of earning
as much as they spend.



As machines become more like minds, minds seem to
become more like machines, but we'll be safe until they
invent a machine that can cry, and mean it.



Sooner or later one's purpose in life comes pushing up
through his mistakes like a delicate flower blooming in a
trash heap.



Each human life is like a new symphony heard for the first
time. It can't be understood or fully appreciated until after
the final cadence.



Perhaps two universes, like two friends on a street, can
meet, nod, and pass without either one giving the event
more than a fleeting thought.



The Law always plays
in a very fair way:
flout and we're out,
obey and we stay.

Results may be quick
or require some delay,

but justice endures;
all debts we repay.



What man has done,
man can do.
Buddha did it;
so can you.



In dreams we float
in a glass-bottom boat
on the tranquil sea
of eternity.



Greed is a weed that will harden your garden.



When prophets turn to profits, wisdom turns within.



If every angry thought were a bullet, humanity would be
in serious trouble.



Faith may move mountains, but did anyone think to ask
the mountain if it wanted to be moved?



Trying to find the origin of life is like trying to remember
your own conception.



When wealth speaks, greed listens.



Is the universe a mindless collection of spinning dirt, or does it know what it's doing? That is the question of the ages. If the former, why are we so intelligent? If the latter, why are we so ignorant?



Computers overly admired
can leave one's life quite uninspired.



Help a friend, a friend to keep;
help a foe, a heaven to reap.



Occasionally necessity takes its jackhammer to our expectations to make way for what the chief architect really wants.



The man who builds his own throne rules over a desert.



Love and gravitation keep the universe interesting.



The best comeback is silence, for who can argue with that?



A kind act is worth a dozen beliefs.



Life brings situations in which we feel like Jonah or Noah, who were each stuck inside something that moved slowly, smelled bad, and couldn't be steered.



A secret, if whispered carefully, will spread faster than the ten o'clock news.



Your child may later thank an early, prudent spank.



Eternity isn't something we wait for--it's what we breathe.



Sooner or later we get what we want, which would be fine if we only knew how to want correctly.



Duty, though unflattering, is far preferred to chattering.



Kindness finds the cracks in a grumpy person's crust.



Here's a sobering thought: by 4,000 AD these present days may be referred to as the Dark Ages.



Reading too much can leave the mind soft and useless.



Desire can't get you close enough to me,
but truest love ignores proximity.



When today's scare headlines are discovered 2,000 years
from now, the archaeologists will have some hearty
laughs. Why not laugh at the headlines now and avoid the
delay?



Pain keeps an internal reform school for those who won't
accept what is.



When mining in books,
remember two rules:
dig where there's gold
and leave glitter to fools.



Marry money:
days are sunny,

life is funny,
sweet as honey.

Markets crash:
no more cash,
tempers clash,
life is trash.

Once we're burned,
much is learned.
What's discerned?
"Bliss is earned."



What seems new
is deja vu.



When one sits to meditate, the mind may at first sound
like a jukebox in a cathedral.



The silence in an elevator full of strangers is different
from that in a forest on a summer evening. The former
silence screams of crowded separateness, whereas the
latter whispers of sequestered unity.



He labored so hard to establish his wealth
that he had no time left for his family's health.
Now his fortune's divided, his body is numb,
and his soul can afford but a heavenly slum.



Show him the rudder, but don't steer his boat.



"I," the thinnest word in the dictionary, easily slips into most of our thoughts.



Live like the bee, who distills the scent of blossoms he's not even bent.



A deed of love pulls a hidden string which makes a bell in heaven ring.



Of non-essential stuff we never get enough.



Physicians, if they wish to heal, must sometimes drop their tools and feel.



If some harvest isn't spared for seed, we forfeit next year's crop to greed.



Some folks there are
who can see afar,
into auras, through walls,
down ancient halls,
but weird sights fill their life
with such anguish and strife

that they curse their clairvoyance
as a major annoyance.



Pain kindly wakes up stupidity
lest it slumber through eternity.



A sharp tongue cuts itself.



Love is the key that unlocks the door of the visible to
reveal a magnificent invisible.



We storm and shout
when life caves in,
then blame without
and not within.



When Truth needs a voice, silence lies.



These troubles he calls
the work of the devil
may be waves of his old days
returning to level.



To suffer least,
control your beast.



Every love affair ends *in* marriage, ends *a* marriage, or just ends.



Competition may appear to be achieving great things for us, but it is forever dashing itself to pieces against the rocks of its inherent conflict. Cooperation is slow, quiet, and unspectacular, but it seems to work better, perhaps because it taps into a deeper spring.



Few men are unmoved by a gentle look, whether from a devoted dog, a pretty girl, a contented cow, or their mother.



Because they're on the climb,
the ambitious have no time,
but those who refuse to aspire
have time to sit by the fire.



Seeing believes, wisdom knows, and love is.



To please the crowd,
be bold and loud;
to know God's will,
be very still.



Truest gifts cannot be wrapped.



The best-laid plans of mice and men too often work.



Love can slip into a padlocked heart.



For heaven's sake,
all things break.



What God has put asunder, let no man paste together.



Let the weary past sleep.



A gift required by convention
is an uninspired invention.



A body gone wild
is a temple defiled.



Though we say we "knew better"
than to act thus and so,

our deeds show our needs
and reveal all we know.



Her anxiety about life's end
makes her piety seem like pretend.



Thank God if your car breaks down oftener than your
body. Some bodies are lemons.



Happy are the wantless, whatever they have or lack.



Harsh words may fall short of fights,
but a human bark always bites.



Married couples do well to imitate the loyalty of dogs and
the self-control of cats.



Dress like a fire
to hook his desire,
like a cool mountain stream
to win his esteem.



The main trouble with living as if there's no tomorrow is
that there always is one.



No separateness, no crowds.



Each day is more evidence of forever.



Do your best and leave the rest.



The dog that quits barking can get some sleep.



Undeserved praise is like a hair in your milk.



The moon and computers are benignly unresponsive to
anger.



Beware of a man with a mission.



We can speak only so many words during our lifetime, so
why waste them with gossip?



The heart loves unity. The mind loves diversity. The body
settles for flattery.



When the grass appears greener on the other side of the
fence, the illusion lies not so much in the grass as in the
fence.



See with your heart--it never needs glasses.



We all have free will. In fact, our will is so free that we
seldom have much control over it.



The cause of anything is no less than everything.



We've wanted since youth
to see the truth,
but we spoil it competing
for front-row seating.



Only when the first janitor enters the library in the
morning does it once again contain truth.



I cry out into the silence to let me hear it.
No reply but silence.

Spin

Mr. Forever tossed me out
for a little spin
toward the ground of being,

and zing! here whoever
I am is, alive and
spinning planetwise.

From earth not far
can I seem to stray
nor live beyond my time
nor see beyond my sight

since Mr. Forever firmly
holds the string reining in
the yo-yo that I am.

Spirits and Spooks

A Rhyme for Halloween

Today is the ghost of the future's past--
your now is a ghost,
my now is ghost,
for whatever we do will last.

There's hope for tomorrow's yesterday--
you are a hope,
I am a hope,
if we nourish each other today.

Regrets are old spooks that may rattle their chains--
fear is a spook,
hate is a spook,
and so are diseases and pains.

So a spirit sits down in your rocking chair--
What can it do?
Can it say boo?
Just smile so it knows that you care.

Halloween raises our old spooks and bummers--
feelings that dump,
nights that go bump,
and dumbs that evolve into dumbers.

But the morning will bring in the Day of All Saints,
who were able to clear
their existence of fear
and their motives of self-serving taints.

What saints may have done, surely any can do
if we make a start
and open our heart
so that giving and love may flow through.

Today is the ghost of the future's past--
your now is a ghost,
my now is ghost,
for whatever we do will last.

Stars

Skyspread of stars
on this clear night
quivers my heart
because all these
are merely what
can be seen.

Stars may see me
naked in clothing,
caught up in the
heresies of here
and there, now
and whenever.

"Brothers," I yell
into the infinite,
"Greetings to all
sources of light!"
The aftersilence
calms my heart.

Still Life

Sunday mind
picks up its pen
behind easy-chair eyes
when, three inches left from a
stained-glass cardinal hanging
red against the window glass
from a suction cup and hook,
is seen a real dove outdoors
fluffed up for warmth
on a telephone wire
amid almost no
snowfall.

Glenn Gould's
Bach Toccatas
play precisely through
the furnace blower's bass
while an off-duty iron
stands unplugged and cool
beside its folded handkerchiefs
on a flimsy-legged ironing board
between here and the brown couch
that bears a draped gold afghan,
throw pillow, and open briefcase.

Eyes divert
to a tiny white nick
in the near edge of the lamp table
and stare for measureless minutes--
then return without reason
to the window.

The dove hasn't moved, nor has the
window's cardinal of glass perceived
this breathless snow, so light
as to be nearly finite.

Storm

when the storm comes
aprons turn into kites
and meadows roll up their grass
as you hang on tight to unknowing

when the storm comes
all sayings gain great meaning
aha is as real as rocks
but the gale isn't hearing you

when the storm comes
the mast breaks away and floats off
before you can lash yourself to it
and the sirens won't stay on the shore

when the storm comes
the moon jumps under the cow
and laughs at the little dog
then takes back the spoon and the dish

when the storm comes
all yes becomes quite maybe
all no seems not so bad
as you hang on tight to unknowing

when the storm comes
flowers recite scripture
trees are genuflecting
and logic's good for a laugh

when the storm comes
all history rolls up in a ball
all tomorrow was never heard of
and the now impossibly grins

when the storm comes
thunder and winter both weep
clouds seem turned by a crank
the crank turned by an ogre

* * *

when the storm abates
the waves all merge into one
which is as good as calm
but you hang on tight to unknowing

when the storm is all over
the sun is back in its place
everything is everywhere again
but you're still not sure moons don't laugh

Storm Tea

Please, come on in.
Those kerosene lamps,
the ones by the windows,
are flickering today.

Listen to November's gale out there
moaning through leafless trees
and twisting off sickly limbs.
The winterbeast clears its throat, eh?

How did you make it
through this windstorm
that rattles my picture frames
against the walls?

And why are you here
when no one else came?
But never mind my questions--
welcome, then, to tea.

Welcome, yes, to tea--
to tea from a pot I forgot I had
in a far corner of the cupboard.
Darjeeling today--I hope it's okay.

How did you find my place--
not to mention why--
or, did what's here
find you?

Now here, have some sips
and stay as long as you can,
for the wind outdoors
is surely fiercer than we.

Window lamps flickering
near you and me and tea--
given everything,
what else would there be?

Stray

As I gaze nightward at our
volunteer chandelier of stars
light-years away (each point
a twinkly memory of a light that was),

a white tomcat approaches me
like an old friend and brushes
my pantleg, crying up from the snow
as if in hungry agony.

I fetch some dry cat food,
pour it into a Styrofoam tray
on my porch, and watch him
dine with great crunching.

My eyes in the blazing sky again,
I drink measureless ancient light
into my emptiness as a gift
from the magnificent All-of-it.

Is our future in the stars?
I laugh aloud into the night air,
feeling the moment so mightily
I care little for any answer.

The speckled black overhead ocean
absorbs my laugh with dignity
while the white stray, finished with his meal,
wipes his chin on my pantleg.

A universe above and a cat below
circumscribe my being in this
delicate wintry instant--
love coming from both ways.

Suburban Reverie

Watering the flowers,
I happen to think of
all the famous authors
working on their newest
books.

Mowing the yard,
I wonder how the
great mathematicians
can prove their theorems
even with computers.

Sitting in my front yard,
listening to the songs
of cardinals and wrens,
robins and blue jays,
I wonder at the amount of
practice an opera star
must submit to.

How about the columnists
and cartoonists and
astronauts and painters,
all being
something?

Here I am,
sitting in my front yard,
in an aluminum lawn chair,
staring at my suburban home,
supporting and
supported by a nice family,
wondering,
wondering.

I'll water the flowers a little more.

Sudden Entrance

Down below the library's
lowest level
we came to an entrance
brilliant white and ellipsoid.

My companion looked in
and called "Anyone in here?"

We began to enter but then
my companion put up his arm
to stop me.

We listened for a moment.

My companion whispered to me,
"He wants to come back
as flower drops."

Whereupon I awakened.

Sun

Our sun
as seen by
the asleep
is a space
heater and
a day lamp
but
oh honey
how very
much we
are in it
and are it
and are and
forever are.

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Sunday Profundity

As the sun pulls up
the blanket of night
to its western chin
and sinks into slumber,
our neighborhood transforms
into a blend of haunting sounds.

An owl cries out--bats flit by--
something whispers in the grass.
A distant rumbling train wails out,
then wanes undulatingly away.
Two hidden toms of a feline triangle
howl their indignity into the dark.

A throaty sports car rushes by
with radio booming
to replace
the dangers of silence
with the safety of din.

The neighbors sit and gesture indoors
like a mute puppet couple between the curtains
of their lamplit picture window,
their children eating popcorn near a vacuous tube
that splashes youthful eyes with artificial color.

No boundaries here outdoors
except the neatly folded edges
of the universe, tucked in
behind a sea of gleaming stars.

When Monday morning opens up
its brilliant eastern eye,
a thousand fervent birds with thrill
and trill their greetings
through the bedroom window glass
in rows of mortgaged homes,
alerting sleeping citizens
the coast is clear once more
for them to venture outside
(after coffee)
to their dewy cars
and motor off into their week.

Suppose

Suppose that
many who went before
are still here--as us--
and we now go before
all future lives--of us.

Suppose that
one major all-of-us
is being lovingly built
from billions of me's
as they labor or shirk,
create or destroy,
rejoice or agonize.

Suppose that
from separate confusion
where the me is king
all grow toward a fusion
century by millennium
which births a new being,
its cells and organs we.

Suppose that
space is pregnant with us.

Sutra Salad

If contentment is enlightenment, then a cow is Buddha.

The kindly man in the mountain cave spoke but briefly: "Search for a way to stop searching."

Ecstasy may have to sweep the floor tomorrow and hate it. Joy works long and lightly.

Life is a backwards meal. We are born with a full plate, getting the dessert first, and we end it with the broccoli and woody asparagus.

The difference between an evangelist and an egotist has yet to be discovered.

Do the holy ones desire desirelessness so that they can do whatever they want to?

Why do I like certain people more than others? Because I see a glow of divinity in them? Because they smile and give me things? Because my weaknesses are their strengths?

Gambling dies a little every time somebody throws away an unopened letter from Publisher's Clearing House.

Like a dog chasing its tail, I struggle toward peace.

Prayer is a boy throwing his ball at the moon and hitting it.

The Guru Scam

1. Here's where you are.
2. Here's where you want to be.
3. Here's what I can do for you.
4. Here's how much you pay me.

The purest forgiveness is not to have noticed. To forgive, therefore, is not to.

A philosophy is a well-dressed metaphor waving from a limousine window.

A religion is a philosophy with a fence around it.

Unless it's just fun to do, helping blows up the helper's balloon a bit.

Symposium

I sing a song of joyous life,
Tra-lee, tra-la, tra-lee;
I dance about my dainty wife
and tip a glassful of glee.

I tell a tale of mine olden age,
and there, and so, and thus;
life's wisdom is my single wage,
and I can't see who's driving the bus.

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Table Grace

We deeply offer our thanks
to the Deepest of Thankables
and our abiding love
to the Most Abiding of Lovables
as we gather here
in grace under grandness
humbly to eat of the earth
so that rippings of renewal
may nurture and empower our
sweetly imperative lives.

May the sustenance we now
receive within ourselves
enable us to give out
more than we possess
as our lungs and souls
breathe more than is air
on our chosen journey
into more than we know.

We honor the One within us
while dwelling within the One.
Amen.

Taps

*New words for
the familiar tune*

We are sad
that you've gone
from this world
which is still
racked with war,
where from hate
bombs make haste--
to lay waste.

May we find
Light within
that will guide
us through dark
fears and pain.
For this world
may we care--
peace be there.

We can long
for good will
in all minds,
in all hearts,
in all souls,
but for now,
here you lie--
Friend, good-bye.

Tavern Talk

Did you ever look deeply
into the eye of a chicken?

No, you say,
they have
nothing between their eyes
but cartilage,
and you laugh at your little joke.

Did you ever look deeply
into the eye of a chicken?

Yes, you say, and
it came over and bought
me a drink,
and you laugh some
more.

**Did you
ever look
deeply into
the eye
of a chicken?**

No, you say, have you?

Yes, I have.

What did you see? you ask.

I saw a light like a little
egg-shaped sun,
and inside it were countless
smaller eggs.
It was like touching my eyeball
to a live wire,
and it lasted for only a split second,
but I saw infinity in the eye of a chicken.

Yeah, I saw that once in a waitress's eye,
you say with a snicker.

Same infinity I saw,
only I didn't have to leave a tip.

Thank You

Thank most you
for all little things big.

Beams of kindness
illumine all paths of you

and I am days on end
in your gentle debt.

Accept please this
as my up payment.

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Thanking the Sweet Silence

An exquisite calm has set in
after weeks of chaos in my being.
That thunder, formerly so rockingly loud,
is now a muted murmuring in the distance.

My new peace is no more explainable
than the prior violence of vibrations
that was ripping my heart out by the roots
and leaving me to decay by a careless roadside.

Would that there were someone to thank,
even myself, if I somehow caused my own release
from those taut janglings and knifelike fear
into a timely if startling serenity.

The planets and stars are so hushed, so calm
that there seems little reason
for any iota of human stress and strain.
To emulate our silent orblike brothers

would seem enough to find peace of soul and mind.
But every orb has earthquakes, storms, and seething fires.
Its quiet, beaming benevolence through clear skies
may be a billion cataclysms deep.

Thank you, silence, from the depth
of my tumult as well as the pinnacle of my euphoria,
and may you permeate my porous existence
with a tempered bliss from deeper down than death.

These Scales Tell Tales

These scales tell tales of gravity
against our mortal frames.
They weigh who choose to step on them
and have no use for names.

But let us weigh the scales themselves
against more subtle things.
Is heavier or lighter weight
the chief divide life brings?

Do souls have weight? Do angels fall?
Will goodness tip the scales
a little more than ill repute?
Just here gravity fails.

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Thoughtlets

for a Quiet Mood

Our Origin

Either:

No one knows our origin, or
No one knows *who* knows our origin, or
People know people who know our origin
and I'm not one of them.
Even so, perhaps the mystery of our
origin has a solution that is in plain view.

Where Are We Going?

We are like electrons laughing and
dancing in a wire. We never go far along
the wire, but the magic we conjure up in
the process, in the here and the now, may
also closely resemble our destination.
Electricity abounds in laughing and loving.
Are we going, then, to where we are?

What Is Doubt?

Doubt is the snake squirming inside us
when we feel superior to teachings we
little understand that are merely poorly
taught. Doubt justifies (or tries to) a
chronic indolence within those who scorn
the sacred as being decay and who shun
advancement as being delay.

What Is Faith?

Faith is an enthusiastic arrow shot toward
the open sky in hopes of hitting some
target. Faith climbs and yearns. Faith is
strong enough, some say, to move
mountains. But when faith and ego
intermix, there can be a mighty
hollowness, a thundering emptiness.
Purest faith quietly and simply serves the
community.

Education

Education is the process of insisting upon
your essence ever more gently. A seed's
essence shoots a stalk up through dirt and
manure--and matures. You are the seed
and stalk. The school system is the dirt.
The curriculum is the manure, because of
which and in spite of which you blossom.

Hiding

The eyes are the windows of the soul, and the mouth's expression is the window of the heart. Children know a fake smile because it fails to match the eyes. They use the voice as a reliable stethoscope. Gestures, too, are a wind-vane revealing the direction of the soul's breath. Eyes, mouth, voice, gestures: these instruments of discovery, plus time, reveal all hiding.

A Mess

Order unperceived is called a mess. A mountain range is then a mess of piled rock, trees, and snow. A rain forest is a mess of flora and fauna. An artist's home may be a mess of paint, canvases, and brushes. Who sees messes? The one who judges. And who judges? The one who is blind to order under disorder.

Seeking

Seek, and you shall find another thing to seek, until you find a grave. Can you drop your seeking? If you can, your seeking may in turn release you. You may then find yourself to be anchored rather than self-yanked by a leash along some self-serving path. You may safely drop all, for nothing truly needful can fall away. A light load, no seeking, no path--will roses then fail to bloom?

Isms

Isms organize great thinking into neat mausoleums, each ism occupying its cataloged row and column, sealed off from change and living. Visit a mausoleum, and you may discover that any original ideas you hear are coming from your own soul, which is not dead, nor will it ever be. Never box me up or seal me up with an ism. Being always alive, I may need to whoop or sing. Let me breathe the breeze until I am the breeze.

Middle

Everywhere we go, we are in the exact middle of all thought, all doing. Others whom we think of as far away are also in that middle. We are billions of middles, all apparently separate yet somehow all concentric--all sharing one middle. Eccentricities continually appear and

prevent stagnation, but they, too, share the middle. Seen from a dynamic middle, all may be well.

Purity

A religious costume is more likely to cloak impurity than to reveal purity. Purity is more a dancing than an achievement, and it dances through every heart in unique rhythm. Purity washes the soul with tears whenever there is a breakthrough. We have seen purity manifest in strong men, in hard women, in awful children. We have known purity by the generous act, the comforting smile, the glistening eye.

Listening

To listen deeply is to give deeply. Words decorate the rise and fall of more than our voice. Words are the throbs of our heart of hearts. Take bread and wine as you wish, but honor the communion of the moment--at school, at work, and in the family circle. Hear the hearing of others as well as their speaking. Meet in receptivity.

Unfamiliar

If we observe and honor the unfamiliar feelings that haunt and hurt us, these feelings will be found the growing ground into which we have already been planted. Following the unfamiliar through the tangled thickets of the familiar may lead to a blooming. Yes, there may be awful aching, fear, and upheavals--but one day comes the sweet grace of the blooming.

Days

At the end of a day, is there one less day in your life or one more day in your life? Is your life a stack of days, like a deck of cards? Or is it a stream in which waking and dreaming ripple on a surface above unfathomed depths? "Are we digital or analog?" we might ask. "Particles or waves?" The particle folks bottle the water and sell it, while the wave folks flow in it toward the sea. Lungs and longings whisper "waves" to my own ears.

When All Goes Well

When all is going well, going badly is not far away. When all seems lost, well-being

hovers nearby like the breath of an angel. Exulting will be humbled; despairing will be consoled. Lucky is the one who has no waves like these to ride--or is he?

Spirit and World

While the Spirit fills our souls with endless hints and nuances, the World carries the World home to the World in little shopping bags. Spirit or World--which is ruling? They may appear to alternate in supremacy, but if you have ever felt the intensity of being worldly, you may agree that Spirit has no rival at all except for lesser Spirit.

Alone?

I ask Above for guidance, and I remain who I am. Was there guidance? I ask who I am, and I remain who I am. I ask why I am here, and here I am, asking. I ask where my ancestors have gone, and silence reveals only their memories and legends. Answers fail. But now a neighborhood child rings the doorbell and asks to talk. We two answer for each other.

Three Gingerbread Men

Three gingerbread men had a talk
in which they searched each other's souls.
The first one stated frankly that he had no soul,
the second that his soul was pure goat's milk.
The third gingerbread man had no bones to pick
nor any goats to milk. He said his soul
was pure gingerbread.
The others laughed and ate him up.

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Three Kisses

The first says
hello.

The second says
how are you.

The third says
it all.

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Three Root Words

When all the words are done,
and all the gestures and looks,
I love you.

When all the miles are traveled
and all the roadblocks passed,
I love you.

When all the arguments are over
and the smile comes after gloom,
I love you.

Love abides beneath all words.
Love knows no distance.
Love dissolves every difference.
I love you.

Through the Center

In the humid stillness
of this August afternoon
I watch a spider spinning its web
in the ceiling corner above
what some may call my deathbed.

Is there a faint whisper?
I hold my breath to hear it.
No, no sound at all--
a silent eight-legged dance
on the wallpaper border,
a twirling in air,
a catching on a thought.

Share the secret
of your web's design with me,
fellow spinner in space,
and I'll reveal it to mankind
in homely phrases,
given a few more days on earth.
Fill me with your simple wisdom
as I lay complexities aside.

What is this long-lost feeling?
As your web takes flimsy form,
my room grows dim, then dark--
this air will not be breathed.
Some force is kindly lifting me
to your delicate ceiling circle
that I may venture through the center
toward our one and only Light.

thursday

open you up any thursday yes dare
be sure to unzip it completely
and let all perhaps of it fall into

crows on a breeze which land in three trees
where they raucously planlessly fidgetly caw
then skittishly fly toward an east deep in maybe

kids into thursday most bicycle fast
chase whylessly after because without is
until gravel turns skin into gauze

bumble thursday all companies every one
muddy with strategy moving into moremore
hired groans crank oh hum the moneygrind

perhaps on a thursday perhaps on a now
some crow will discover what when is
turn human and lose all that zen is

Tilting

When fall falls in,
Nature's eyes grow dimmer
into the sleep of winter.
Does anyone think to ask "Why?"

Oh, you say, the earth's axis is
23 degrees tilted, and as it
revolves around the sun,
the seasons cycle.

But why 23 degrees?
What tipped the earth?

Are people tipped 23 degrees inside,
causing hot and cold emotions?
Are our dreams for the future
tipped 23 degrees from coming true?
Does our day tip 23 degrees
before evening?

Nothing seems exact on this
physical plane, nor is it
exact on the mental plane.

Exact triangles are hollow.
Exact circles become spirals.
If I try to think straight,
I'm about 23 degrees off,
tipped to the side by self.

But whatever created 23 degrees,
bless fall and its beautiful falling in.

The Time I Was Late

December snow covered the ground, and many sidewalks were not yet shoveled. And I was late--I was going to be late for school. The earth might implode like a broken light bulb or explode like a cherry bomb, but I still had to be on time to school. I had never been late.

My report card for my first year of exposure to institutional learning was monotonously filled with A's in the rows for the subjects and 0's in the rows for days absent and 0's in the rows for times tardy and checks in all the rows for good deportment. My parents never said much about these great accomplishments, but I knew they were secretly proud of me by the way they never scolded me about school. They always got a sort of funny smile on their faces when I would bring home my report card, the kind of smile that is pretty flat and a little turned down at the ends. Then they would say, "Well, that's pretty good. Do you like Miss Larson?" And I would say "Yah." Then they would sign the report card and put it back into its brown envelope and give it back to me saying, "Now don't lose it." And that was like telling me not to lose my right foot.

Grandpa Green had told me when I started to school that he would give me a nickel for every A I got on my report card. So every six weeks I would write him a letter telling him about all the A's I got. An A in reading, an A in arithmetic, an A in spelling, an A in writing, an A in whatever other subjects I was taking, or were taking me. Nine A's, I told him one time at his house. He said, "Let's see, how much do I owe you then?" "I don't know." "Well, a nickel is 5 cents, isn't it?" "Yah." "Well, then, how much is 9 times 5?" "I don't know." "That comes to 45 cents, doesn't it?" "I guess." Then he would dole out the 45 cents or whatever the amount happened to be for that six weeks and like a good thrifty boy I would put it in my little silver metal bank that locked up with a key and I didn't have the key.

But I was going to be late for school. It was cold out and the big hand on the kitchen clock was getting down close to 4 and I had to be at school by the time it got to 6 and Mom was helping me put on my jacket and boots and hat with built-in earflaps and leggings and mittens and I was watching the clock and saying hurry up and I was finally ready to go but just before I got to the door Mom asked me if I had a hanky and I said no and she said wait a minute you've got to take a hanky and she ran upstairs to get one and I sort of had to go to the bathroom and the big hand kept on moving and I had never been home this late before and I stood there holding my lunch pail waiting by the door and finally she came down and helped me put the hanky in my jeans pocket underneath my leggings and then she kissed me good-bye and I ran out the door and kept running down our long street that ended at Mrs. Richards' house and my boots were heavy and I couldn't keep running like that so I walked awhile and then I ran some more and I was running past Charles Johnson's house and I got to the tracks and looked both ways and ran across them even though I was never supposed to run across the tracks because I might fall down and get hit by a zephyr because somebody else had done that once and I was still trying to run but I could hardly even walk and on my Mickey Mouse watch that Grandpa Green had bought me one time at the drug store the hand was down to 5 and I was only as far as the Ford garage and then I heard the first bell ringing at school and I never before realized you could hear the first bell at school from that far away and I started to kind of cry and I was puffing and running and my boots were too heavy and I was kicking snow as I ran and walked and ran again and I started down the last street that led to the school but it was the longest one and I couldn't run any more but I had to so I ran some more and the hand was almost down to 6 when I finally got to the big playground and it was empty and I had never seen it empty before and I stumbled up the steps and when I was in the cloakroom tearing off my coat and boots and hat and mittens and leggings the second bell started ringing and everyone was supposed to be in his seat facing forward with his hands folded on his desk and not talking when the second bell rang and I walked into the room just as the bell stopped ringing saying hopefully to Miss Larson that I was almost late wasn't I and I collapsed into my seat and was sick all morning.

Tired Minds

Our minds,
like tires,
tread round and round,
going places,
coming back,
going flat,
getting pumped,
wearing down,
and finally
retiring.

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To a Telephone Pole

You, sir, with triangular brace,
have more common sense than the whole human race.

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To Be a Butterfly

| What you will possess: | What you will give up: |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Perfectly clean motives | All of your real estate |
| Immunity from disease | Most of your lifespan |
| Freedom from taxes | All of your furniture |
| Pure atmosphere | All of your clothing |
| Beautiful wings | All of your friends |
| Quick reflexes | All your money |
| Tasty nectar | Physical body |
| Flight | Heaven |
| Joy | Hell |

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To My Body

Dear dundering
obedient blob that
I have lived through
these 45 years,
have I ridden
in you
or have you ridden
on me?

No Solomon could
ever distinguish us--
your actions me,
your pains me,
and you me--
but I somehow not you.

There will be
a sacred day
when you fold
your way into
the earth
as I slip freely
into the air
as much alive
as you dead.

I thank you deeply
from inside
for long service
as my antenna
into a tragic
comedy program
I almost dare
enjoy.

To My Wife

Your glance is beautiful
when I muster the calm
courage to look you
in the eye.

Your voice sounds
like a symphony
when I listen to all
of its overtones.

Your heart sings
like a canary in a
cage, heedless of
supposed captivity.

You light a candle
behind my eyes
which illuminates
my gloomy mind.

Together we plunge
down this life's waterfall,
two drops on our
way to the sea.

We will not forget
these days nor want to.
Our love has no relation
to time or place. We love.

To Rolla Swanson

Our charming corner church
fills and drains each week
like a religious rain barrel,
housing harmonious humans
an hour or two,
who then flow out into
the rivers and gutters of living,
bouncing and banking,
filing to the fullness
of the sky-sucked sea
for relief, and relife.

Numb need flows along
these sine-wave streams.
The men need the
women need the
children need the
future.

This needful flow of living
winds through a riverbed of love,
which was and will be,
with wax and wane,
as long and long
as water will be wet.

To Sister Marjorie

For this may God be praised:
our Christ was raised,
the temple is secure,
we shall endure.

The fellow with the tail
can make us fail,
can give us loneliness,
grief, shame, and stress.

There will be sobs and tears
and barren years
and prayers that won't take wing
and stares that sting.

The Father sees it all
and hears our call.
He sees our sorest needs,
our hunger feeds.

Since food and clothes are sure,
since love is pure,
since prayers are always heard,
trust in the Word.

To Sleep

Body and bed go soft.

Final thinking fades to formless vapor.

Mattering gives way to "all is well."

Breathing forgets breathing.

Shapeless shadows welcome a friendly falling.

Wishes murmur up through moving images.

Dewdrop opens into endless ocean.

Time unknown . . .

Innerly free . . .

Floating . . .

Drifting . . .

Peace . . .

80-megaton alarm clock explodes.

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To Wake Up To

The world disappeared entirely
for a few hours.

Gone.

Where were you?

Don't say, in your bed.

You were down in up under beyond worlds.
You took the whole shebang off
like your socks
and went deep into nowhere.

I was there too, but I didn't see you--
or anyone else.

Dead into a most alive life we sank.

Dark into a colorless light.

Reincarnation, is there?

Every day, let's say.

Your bed was pregnant all night with you,
but now, in the morning,
cut the cord,
breathe today's first breath,
cry quietly with first muscle,
and go.

There is go, and we must.

There is day, and we mount it.

It's all a ride but we must pedal,

a pleasure but we must groan.

Welcome back to your thatness

after a blissful this.

You have made it possible

for there to be whatever humanness is,

and so have I,

and every each of us

in our nowhere core.

Together

There was never a never
so always as forever
nor a permanence
so flimsy as finished.

There was never a happy
so permanent as joy
nor a falseness so
fleeting as autonomy.

Insulation clothes well
till it suffocates,
and protection is safe
till it isolates.

To breathe always joy
let our hearts strive together
most brave toward that space
both above and unknown

where our labor with stones
can build the next temple.
Build we together or
become we the stones.

The Tortured Joy

The company had sent its pamphlets on ahead, so everyone in town knew of that spring's event. The drift in barber shops and telephones foretold a green success.

That night a grandstandful looked on as marching marchers marched in song onto the field. Speculators in the stands kept up a wide-eyed buzz, out-answering each other.

"My God, look what they're doing now, Ethel! They're going to raise the cross that man brought in. It must have been about like this last year-- I hope he has the same amount of luck."

They nailed him to the cross, each hammer-stroke inviting groans and shrieks from lookers-on. The band was playing the national anthem, keeping time with the pound--pound--pound.

At his last words (picked up by microphones) each person fell down on his knees and bowed his head--but most eyes peeked to see the rest. Crews dimmed, then doused the floodlights--all was still.

They let him down and locked him in a room behind the grandstand for a mournful hour. Then Jove (the stadium's janitor) unlocked the door to get a broom--and let him out.

Darkness enabled him to cross the field and shinny up the cross, but now, instead of hanging by his nails, he stood with one foot on each side of the crossbar, arms raised.

They switched the floodlights on and aimed some searchlights deep into the spangled sky; the band broke into stirring patriotic tunes, and the crowd let forth a cheer of tortured joy.

The marching marchers marched back whence they came and everyone filed out, remarking how it was the best they'd ever seen or how they thought it might have been improved.

A Traveler's Tale

*Step over here a moment, if you please;
I'll tell you a tale which may your fancy seize
Or, if you're old, may possibly displease.*

Slipping time, of course, will kill a man,
But, think I, there is something more than time
In every natural death. Oh yes, say I,
Vibrations of the supernatural
Confound our lonely loony lives the more
For our denial of their awesome power.
Let me pluck a rich example from
The undercurrents of my memory:

The beard of wizened white swayed calmly as
The brittle ancient rocked his pensive chair
And reveried his many pasts. He knew
Somewhere within his lonesome bones the ten
Dead-looking fingers he possessed by far
Outnumbered his remaining years or months
Or--what he thought was likeliest--days.
The optimist, yes, optimist I say,
(Ten minutes would have been a closer guess)
Could not foresee his tragedy that day.
Each time he rocked he minused his remaining
Seconds by one tick, one tock, one rock.

The red clay jar stood center on the broken
Top of marble on his yearful desk.
The center of his life, this jar became,
For parent after parent of his line
Of ancestors had forwarded the myth
That supernatural forces lurked within
Its clay, some power that governed life and death.
Religiously, throughout his wifeless life,
The old man trimmed his fingernails just so,
Not too long or crookedly or short,
And dropped the trimmings carefully into
The timeless jar with utmost caution not
To let one fall outside its gaping rim.
Oh, deepest death if ever that should happen--
Time would shuffle to a sickly halt.

But now yeared eyes could plainly see that death
Was far from far away: a mound of yellowed
Fingernails was piled above the rim.
The jar with all his packing down would hold
Not many more, he knew. The time when one
Would vibrate from the pile and fall beside
The jar was near, too near to free his thoughts
From dreams of death and musings of its shape.

In silence as he rocked in silent thought
His black-haired cat traversed the soiled rug
And stopped unseen beside the desk. It gave
A weakened leap (it lived on non-existent
Rats and mice that roamed the undug basement
Of the one-floor house) and missed its mark,
Falling on its once-lithe feline ribs
With an animal thud. The old man stopped
His motioned chair and sat transfixed, wide-eyed.
The cat resumed its feet and jumped its all
And landed on the olden oaken desk.
Its thready whiskers brushed across the jar:
A fingernail end fell to the broken
Marble surface of the desk, and then
The cat fell lifeless to the rugged floor.

A wave of horror washed the old man's brain--
He felt a thrill of long-lost warmth surround
His head and stomach, bones and gasping lungs,
And down into the deepness of the rug
He fell, beside the rocking rocking chair.
As nothingness approached he thought he heard
His doorbell ringing for the first time since
The ancient inundation and the garden
With the stones and fiery wheels had come.

*The aged one was thus undone, kind friend.
If this has entertained you, please be kind
Enough to drop into this hat a coin.*

Tree Choirs

High twigs in the trees--
do they croon nocturnal chords
to you out of a winter-spring wind?
Chords not merely for ears, perhaps,
but chords filling human with being?

Seasonally smitten with tingly new sap,
each leeward-leaning trunk
resigns helpless branches to the air,
eerie groans waxing and waning
as from a deep unknown
just behind where you live.

How do you feel?
Try setting aside your daily newspaper
and turning into nothing but ears
to follow these pining strains.
How far inside of you go those moans?
Have they turned you inside out yet?
No?

Then listen all night, all night, all night.
Listen all night,
and waken.

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Turvy

I rise to sleep
some bliss to take
then fall awake
to earn my keep.

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Twenty-One Lines of Tree

A fecund soil-seed makes explosive blossom
In the dankness of the womby underearth,
Assimilates the healthness rain and chemistrates it
Steadily into an ever-growing stem and
Pop, one day,
Pop.

The embryo gives itself rude birth in dirt.
A green grapple begins:
Growth against the grave inexorable final-falling force.
The yearly climb proceeds.
Atom mounts photosynthetic atom, clings and lives.

Cold unfeeling freeze-trees breezes wind
Around a thickened frozen trunk,
And warm moist licking balms blow teasingly
Into unfurling sun-retaining leaves.

Its life of cycling seasons lingers on
Until arrives the fatal year:
The tree dies--that is all, just dies and falls.

The rotting wood and roots return their loan
And merge into the ground again until

A second soil-seed makes explosive blossom.

Two Birds in a Tree

A large bird alights
on a small branch
at the top of a poplar tree.

He bounces and wavers in the breeze,
keeping his balance.

Such is human life.

Another bird alights
on a small branch
very near the first one.

Both bounce and waver in the breeze,
but in different rhythms.

Such is married life.

Two Haiku

Our supper table,
magnet of our emotions,
lies covered with crumbs.

* * *

Gusting summer rain
glitters into our backyard
under shining sun.

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Two Songs

Song of Doubting Logic

What an incongruity
that in this flesh a soul can be!

Song of Spiritual Revelation

What an incongruity
that in this flesh a soul can be!

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Two Windows

Please
don't be
fooled by
what you
think you
see through
that window.

Nothing is there.
What to see
is inside
the seen.

Out there
is a parade
of decay
and illusion.

Inside, where
seeing is whole,
waits a beauty
you long ago knew
in the rolling
of your lives.

Try the window
within.

Two Wrinkles in Bliss

The sun is where
it needs to be.

Every breath
in every being
breathes the rhythm
of the Drummer.

All is permeating
every bit of all.

Except for the
peskiness of
atoms and egos,
might not this place
be heaven?

Unclosed Loops

Life after rollicking life
I have littered
and frittered
but mostly learned
within unclosed loops.

The room where I work
is a monument to
get-out-and-leave-out
and all my other rooms
imitate such open loops.

Shall I dare to suggest
that every spiral
is an unclosed loop?
And point out that spirals
are the basis of life
on all of its planes?

Closed-loop people
I have seen, dazzling
in their neatness,
smilingly prompt,
dickensly proud
of their punctilious
buttoned-downishness.

Do devotees of closed loops
expire with a snap, I wonder?
And will I expire someday
with an ambiguous sigh?

Let's broadly hint that
perhaps people never do expire
but instead subscribe over time
to suitably-spiraled-up bodies,
incremental costumes for playing
parts in this human drama
of infinite run. "Death" is all
the rage these eons, but only
for those who think their eyes
see all there is to see.

Let's even risk wondering
whether supposedly closed loops
might be minor quanta within major
evolving spirals.

Unclosed as my loops are,
I admit to irritating the tidy.
Closed, the tidy may enjoy
their control, but beyond
their cubishness a universe
swirls with intranesting
spirals that may little praise
the painful righteousness
of an organized desk drawer.

Now, where is that CD
I bought yesterday?
Has it spiraled off?

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Universal Questions

If the sun could speak,
it might inquire, "Who am I?
Where am I going?"

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Upbeat

I wish you
pleasant days and
correctable anomalies
as we all tread
left-right-left
through this
amazingly beautiful
world of pitfalls
and exaltations.

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Urge

From ego-egg of
separateness we someday
hatch because we must.

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Urges

wild wind
blow me
safe into
all here

all here
let me
fly out on
wild wind

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Ventilating the House of Knowing

Knowing is stowing;
unknowing is flowing.

Building a house requires intricate knowing;
living in it will tap a rich, dangerous stream not charted in the blueprints.

To study someone's horoscope numerically builds up a house of concepts;
to cry with someone is to surrender to an indescribable flowing.

Financial expertise is a product of keen attention and experience;
heartfully allocating resources can be done by a three-year-old giving his dog a biscuit.

To gather straight A's in college is an obedient harvesting of the known;
later upheavings may lead to sleepless, fathomless nights that drain away diplomas but open one's heart to a fresh humility.

Knowing is a keen memory of all the chess openings, over a neatly squared chess board, with well-behaved pieces;
unknowing brings one to a bewilderment in midgame from which a victory may spring.

Knowing within a religion can spawn rickety beliefs, defensive fears, or exclusive duality;
to avoid naming the nameless, or believing in the heard, or excluding the "other" can admit a universe into the mind, and release the mind into a universe.

Experience leads to knowing; knowing leads to more intense experience;
then perhaps to a shambles; from which may emanate a steadying awe of the flowing.

The known manifests as forward motion;
the unknown as a gentle, inscrutable smile.

The knower has developed a system for success, having created a perfect tinker toy windmill;
his fragile fabrication already tosses precariously on an unseen boundless sea.

Many know their appetites, preferring a certain spice or sugar;
the mysterious source of all flavors is unknown to them but controls their dining.

Professors in universities want to increase and perpetuate the known;
the Perpetual winks.

Knowing is to have a well-kept lawn;
flowing is to have nothing but everything, to leave it right where it is, and perhaps to care for the lawn too.

A brilliant nation converts a billion dollars worth of knowing into a Stealth Bomber;
to sit at one's dinner table is to fly imperceptibly fast on a planet, free of charge, without need of a target.

Knowers worry about dying, which might destroy their tinker toy windmill;
the imponderable is immense and welcomes windmills of all designs.

A violinist knows his part; a conductor knows his score; a composer knows how to
notate his emotions;
*in concert all of them yield their knowings to the fountain source of music, with
exquisite results.*

The known is of great price;
the unknown is priceless.

Assertions have been made herein as if known;
a puff of wind from no direction will soon scatter them without loss.

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A Vision

Our new world is coming,
devoid of rage,
with creatures not eaten
and guns melted down.

Its two-party system
is cordial and fair--
the Forwardists move
as the Holdists delay.

The trade is quite honest
and arguing's rare
as the selfish now give,
the ambitious now serve.

How can this world
ever work? you may ask.
Aren't giving and serving
quite dull? you inquire.

We will see as we go,
but the strife in the old,
based on you, me, and them,
was a nightmare of self.

What mattered the most
was mostly matter,
that dubious deity
for eyes that see down.

Our new world is coming
between all the bullets
and bombs--yes, coming
as surely as daylight.

Voice

A departed one
still sounds the same years later
in the inner ear.

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Walk

I walked with you today--
with you and the One inside you
who beamed light through your eyes.

Your voice seemed more than your voice
and held meaning beyond your meaning.
Who was in you speaking?

I walked with you and mystery today,
and now I need to learn Who dwells in you.
Perhaps the One inside me knows.

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Walking the Life

Activity is a magic
that clears cobwebs
from the mind and
unclogs the heart.

To sit and sit
or even stand and sit
is not to walk the life.

Walking the life is
mixing with others
who are walking
their lives too,
trying to try
and failing to fail.

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Wanting

I didn't want to have to want
but I had to want not to hurt
so I wanted what I felt was best
but everyone else wanted it too
and there wasn't enough of it
so conflicts and hurt prevailed
even though we wanted peace.

Now what I really seem to want
is not to have to want at all
but if I can always never want
will that be what I'll always want?

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War Baby

After I came beginningless
into Illinois in 1943
as a first-born joy,
I drank World War II in
with my sweet mother's milk.

Bombs were dropping quietly
behind her caring embrace
and exploding in her
goodnight kiss.
I breathed her worried love
and thought it was air
if I thought at all.

Twenty-five times my father
thrust his B-17 "Spot Remover"
carrying ten trembling airmen
through German defenses
and sowed the karmic seeds
of a quick explosive harvest--
while I was piling up wooden blocks
and hearing rhymes
about moons and spoons
and thumbs and plums.

So much war-worried gentleness
was transmitted
by my mother's reassuring smile
that perhaps I heard small
voices back in my throat
screaming for mercy
as they laughed.

My father came home
a new stranger
who wanted to be king
of the little home
my mother and I had shared.
Who was this intruder,
this usurper?
He wrecked our delicate bond
with his love
and his jubilant grief
after peace was declared
with Hitler tucked into a coffin.

I wanted to play with cars
and building blocks like before
but my father dared
to order me around
like a bomber crew
and have me bring him things.

Wasn't it about then
that I learned
to kill flies?

Washing Windows

This morning we two are washing
our upstairs windows, a yearly drudge--
you indoors, and I out on a ladder.
Each other's face appears begrimed
through window after window
as we wiggle them free from
their filthy aluminum tracks.

We do lose our patience, let's admit,
if the other of us turns imperfect
somehow or startles the first
with a near-fall or a near-drop.
Danger and caution are dancing.

Suburban cleanliness fails to fool me.
I feel underneath this dayness an expansive
nightness where one's essence may freely
float between shadows of shadows
or bask in uncanny glimmers of glory,
having seen no shape, thought no thought.

Day distracts us. When we think to be
simply washing windows, an inner
mysteriousness guides our hands
from far behind our eyes. Day has
dangers, but night is as safe as Allness.
Wipe your glass clean, yes, but be not
deceived by what you see through it.

I could settle for a diet of only days--
our windows, their cleaning, shaky ladders,
plus countless other depthless decoys that
dwellers of the eye have come to accept.
But I won't.

I must be soft into knowingless night,
where quiet bumpings and strange
bewilderments flow, merge, disappear.
My appetite is for the fruit of freedom
growing upon hidden trees of maybe.

Wipe your window, yes, in bright daylight--
but I insist on washing my side with night.

Watching No Baseball

We are sitting behind left field,
you and I, alone in the stadium.
We watch home plate where
no batter swings at no ball
that no pitcher has pitched.

Intently we follow no action anywhere.

The scoreboard contains no numbers
about forgotten innings.

Behind home plate
no umpire fiddles with
his protective pad
or runs the game with
shouts and gestures.

We are very much here.

No catcher signals for
crafty pitches to be hurled
from the vacant mound.

We sit here
safely upheld by bleachers
empty of roaring rabble.

Undwarfed by
an immense space
entirely eventless,
we inhale silence.

No need for talk.

After just enough
emptying of minds,
seeing everything that is
and isn't here
from arbitrary seats,
we know that it's over.

Down the winding exit stairs
we climb without a word
behind no crowds
to the busy sidewalk.

We exchange glances
but don't need to say
who won.

The Water

You cry your first in your mother's arms.
The water trickles down the drain.

You soon grow into a toddler's knowing.
The water flows beneath the streets.

You attend your schools for diplomas, degrees.
The water enters a nearby stream.

You have your wedding, children, career.
The water joins a seaward-flowing river.

You make mistakes in ethics; health goes weak.
The water reaches the peace of the sea.

You retire from your career to savor life.
The water now is one with all the seas.

You suffer through precursors of mortality.
The water feels a need to rise.

Your body quits, and you leave it where it is.
The water rises through a mist into a cloud.

You enjoy long bliss in the space of Light.
The water joins a darkening cloud.

You feel a longing toward the physical again.
The water rains down and seeps into a well.

Your vision of the Light has faded now.
The water is drawn from the well for drinking.

You feel confined and utterly doomed.
The water breaks.

You cry your first in your mother's arms.
The water trickles down the drain.

Ways



The way of water
is a downward way.
Humbly it meanders
under and between
until some low sea
breathes it aloft
into our only sky.

The way of forests
is to drink deeply
and unfold sunward
through brittleness
into more calm than
can be understood
by most ambulators.





The way of deserts
is to store and restore.
Cacti are old canteens
holding what's dear
behind prickled walls
while basking loftily
in abundance of sun.

The way of ways
is a study in if.
Go we fully know
but ends we don't.
A way is how best
we can walk with
our bag so heavy.



Weather Forecast

Plan on being
warmer tomorrow
with a 60 percent
chance of light
karma mixed
with opportunity.

No storms
are in sight
until Friday
when a wave
of retribution
sweeps in
from the West
to spread doubts
and briefly intense
doomshowers.

Your historical high
for this date
has been forgotten
and let's not even
think about your low.

Tune in tomorrow,
way in,
and remember,
if you don't have
any weather,
you are somewhere
else.

Welcoming Patrick Keith Harris

August 7, 1994

Where have you been now, oh Patrick me boy,
Before your grand entrance that brought so much joy?
Were you out in the starlight quite happy and free?
Had you any idea who your parents would be?

Were the comets your friends, Patrick Harris me boy?
Did you reach toward the moon thinking "What a nice toy?"
Wherever you've been, Patrick, welcome to Earth--
It's a fairly nice place once you get past the birth.

You will have the best care you could ask for, me lad,
From Mika and Brian (you know, Mom and Dad),
Who will give you a bed, healthy food, and much love
In a home where you'll heighten the blessings thereof.

Three things Grandma Linda and I wish for you:
May the heaven within you guide all that you do;
May the bumps on your path make you fearless and strong;
And may life for you, Patrick, be happy and long.

Grandpa Alan Harris, poet
Grandma Linda Harris, editor

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What Lies Ahead*

What lies ahead no human mind can know--
Tomorrow may bring happiness or woe.
We cannot carry charts
Save the Faith that's in our hearts
As down the Unknown Way we blindly go.

***Note:** The above poem was not written by me, nor have I been able to discover the name of its author. I found it handwritten on the opening page of a 1941 wartime scrapbook kept by my grandmother, Theda M. Harris. I was strangely moved by this poem and felt it to be worth preserving and sharing. I'd be grateful to anyone who can e-mail me the name of its author.

--Alan Harris

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What the Pencil Says

A dull red pencil,
lowly servant,
spreads lead
onto a scrappable page.
Spirit writes through low clay
to spread high hope.

The pencil says:

*An era of peace,
now within the reach of human minds,
is a magnificent certainty
which will receive us
as an angel receives a departed saint.*

*The world will be true unity--
No nations, no empires, no strife.
God will rule and humans will work,
and praise, and create, and sometimes die.
War will be a historical word.*

May we hear the pencil
which announces these blessings,
and in our hearts
may God's will prevail.

What To Do

Place your center
in the Center—
the who-most
of your core
in the God-most
of the Cosmos
for the Now-most
of Forever.

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The Wheel of Yes

Round and round
the wheel of yes
(with a thank you at every turn)
turns.

Every no becomes
a speck of dust
clinging only to surfaces
and frightened by
the blessed tremendousness
of bountiful shadows
out of the unknown.

The wheel of yes brings babies
out of grandness onto planets,
sounds out of souls
into other souls,
joy out of gloom,
inspiration out of worry.

Who is turning
the wheel of yes?
Who is loving
amidst the dooms of fear?
Who is giving
more than there ever was?

Yes.
Yes.
Yes.

When Poems Are Still

It is calm of times now,
poems having disappeared like a mist.
Yesterday's nagging scintillations
that promised a tryst of wordings
now lie content below any saying, any art.

Quite free from poetry is almost any peace
until some brazen poet arrives
to stir up some alphabet soup--
but the very deepest calms, like a sea bottom,
lie mute beneath all chop of words and wind.

Today let there be rest from poems
and from other twistings of the mind,
for it is calm of times now, free enough
for wordless breath, and breath, and breath.

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When You're in a Frump

You really don't care,
you surely can't dare,
and your house and your desk
look a dump.

When no one calls up
to go out for a cup
you recline in your chair
like a lump.

Your life has gone flat,
you're verging on fat,
and you'd easily pass
for a grump.

Well, I'm in a frump
and you're in a frump--
let's go have some tea,
you and me.

Who Indeed?

When winter cracks open
and spreads infusions
of early spring air
through our kitchen
window screen,
we thrill at our gift.

New warmth assures us
of renewal and refreshment,
like the settling of
an old argument.

A robin, the first we've seen,
is poking in the brownish grass,
and through the window
we hear our aging neighbor's
Harley clear its throat
then murmur slowly past.

Who transforms winter into
spring? Who melts the patches
of remaining ice in puddles
and brings buds to the bushes?

We sense a coming comfort
with as much faith as a baby
anticipating a maternal hug.

Spring will soon hold us
magnificently captive
in its luxurious cradle
from which we will
crave no escape.

In our side yard outdoors
two neighbor boys play catch
with a baseball which winter
had stowed away in the shed,
being now thrown with gusto.
Whap! Whap! goes the ball into
leather gloves which soften
the impact of youthful zeal.

Who guides this ball
from hand to glove?
Who prompts exclamations
like "Good throw!" or "My fault!"
oscillating between throwers?

Who cares for us all enough
on this pivotally warm day
to bring us sweeter breaths
after winter's bitter winds?

Who, indeed?
Yes, Who?

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Whoever Built Chopin

Who so deftly astounds
our roots by means of
Chopin?

How the Preludes
fly and dip and
pause and squeeze
orange harmonies
lasting for days
within the heart's
chamber.

Whoever built Chopin
and voiced his hands
can hardly mean us
any harm.

A Wiggly Sopsty

I falt a wiggly sopsty
and clev a vagger gand;
no swegler fad a seggy
nor vindo sendy mand.

When jigmer salgo varyd
was tiggy varomund,
then cladry falgarondo
with pleggy fabripund.

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Winter Solstice

Our Christmas cards are sent,
riding away on ZIP codes and good nature.
Cards trickle in a few a day
and say about what we had said
plus a broken ankle or a bought house.

Our light-filled tree
with presents around its roots
gives and gives to the living room.

Soon will be family celebrations
where ribbons and wrapping paper
suggest swaddling clothes
and the heart will say yes, okay.
Humor will be high and faces flushed
as wanna-haves come out of boxes
and druther-haves fail to quite show up.

This drama time is bigger than everybody
as the kindly solstice breathes love to earth
in lung-sized packages
for giving and forgiving onwardly.

Let us have Christmas in all its outer glory
and, after thinking it over,
we may inwardly say thank you
and feel blessed.

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Within Our Keep

What is this stillness in the stable?
What glow is here within our hearts?
Who lies so small between us?

Far more seems given us in this bed
than infant pounds and length--
how weigh, how measure possibilities?

Although just now our baby sleeps,
his waking eyes reveal an inner light--
some holy mystery within our keep.

We bow.
We love.
We are silent.

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Word

No mouth big enough to say it,
no voice sweet enough to sing it,
but there, riding on every breath,
is the Word from which words rain down.

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World

Is a world hard
like a cue ball?
Or beyond touch?

Does it jangle
with war threats
or does it hum
soft in the heart
like tuned strings
on a fine harp?

Is a world separate I's
on a spinning rock
engaged and enraged
with each other
while blinded by what
they can merely see?

Or is a world precisely
who one can be
(within utmost Who)
subtler than mind
with endless stairs
from love up to Be?

Wounded Holidays

**Dedicated to the Compassionate Friends
and all who are grieving the loss of a child**

Young, they left our homes.
In a moment, long or quick,
they were gone.

Dewdrops turned into teardrops,
the shining sea too small
to hold our grief.

"Give us our children back," we pled
as we noticed their plateless places
at the table.

Regret made a river through our days,
tempering laughter,
pervading sudden silences.

Bodies they had through us, with us--
bodies housing minds and souls--
no longer.

The holiday season's return
makes throb now the wounds
we felt at their parting,

wounds which may heal
in time, we hope,
into strength--

but not yet, in this season
of snowflakes that sting and cookies
that somehow taste of vinegar.

"If only," goes our carol.
If only they could return to us--
but no.

If only
we could speak with them--
but no.

If only we could love them
so intensely that they could
feel our presence right now--

but yes, yes to this one,
a thousand yesses--
they can.

How can they not feel our love,
being core in core with us,
heart in heart?

We give love this season to them and
to each other as plundered parents
and wounded healers.

With love flowing, something in our lives--
a magnificent, mysterious Something--
guides us like a star.

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Writer's Block Zen

Mind is empty now,
free of passing sentiments—
no wind in the trees.

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A Younger Friend

All gosh upmost joy she much so
has, kindly exploding out of
her ice cream sundae heart
topped with quips and smiles

while spinning effervescent futures
or singing laughinations out of
I-dare-you presents or geysering
forth with heartacious good will.

From upper, inner wheremost
emerges bouncing and penetrating she,
who can jump a moon or be one
without or with a cow or three.

Breezy of soul, a dreamer of whims
that go wham and ideas that go am, she
and her wand zing out angel dust from within
to make stiffness and topsies turn dancingly turvy.

Yuletide's Deepest Bell

A scratch-scratch-scratch
of Christmas card writing is
wiggling world kitchen tables.

Tight holiday harmonies
from the stereos fill up
festooned family rooms.

Annual gladness is
picking up speed
as the ringers ring,
the shoppers shop,
the bustlers bustle,
and the hawkers hawk.

Bells remind the weary
of pulsings in their hearts,
transforming drone to tone.

Such yearly yuletide waves
are too magical to be real,
too real to be magical,
too just-right to be
too anything at all.

Yes, talkers overtalk,
laughers overlaugh,
givers overgive,
and eaters overeat, but
a subtle force is working
to knit separated threads
into scarves of good will.

Folks feel an ancient peace
and join at the heart in joy
when the Deepest Bell rings
"One.... One.... One...."

The End