

The Crystal Prison

Poetry of Love and Loss

David Muxó-McPherson

The Crystal Prison
The Little Man
Songs from the Heart



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Preface to the Fifth Edition

Much has happened during the seven years between the first edition of *The Crystal Prison* and this one. I continue to write poems for *Crystal* but have added *Songs from the Heart* which contains poems based on the titles of songs that I have enjoyed throughout my life.

I began writing poetry as a youth imitating the subjects and style of the Romantic poets Shelly and Keats. When I went to college I read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," by T.S. Eliot, and saw new possibilities for my poetry. The first poem in *The Crystal Prison* is an homage to him, written in my early twenties. What I left behind after those years was the use of obscure literary references.

Over the years I began to formulate a poetic strategy which culminated in *The Little Man*. The key word was simplicity. My goal was poetry that everyone could understand and in which everyone could participate. Not exactly a new idea, but one which I wanted to try.

When I started reading T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings, and other twentieth century poets, I largely discarded traditional form. I also decided to use intentional rhyme sparingly, divorcing it from poetic form and using it for emphasis. And always cadence with Poe's raven on my shoulder. I might say that I write for the sound in my head. I seldom read my poetry aloud. Line length is intentionally irregular and choppy, almost as though it

doesn't matter what the poem looks like, but instead what it sounds like. Although in several cases the look adds an element to the poem, such as in "If I Could Only Be Like Bogie".

In the grand scheme of things my poetry seems to me to be trivial. I have never wanted to change the world with my poetry. Only lately has it become a tad political, but rarely. Rather than treating universal truths, my poetry treats universal feelings, although perhaps they are one in the same. Many poems are short scenes, as though they were plucked out of a longer poem. Emily Dickinson may have influenced me there. And perhaps a case could be made that thematically I have moved from Keats to Dickinson.

I am no Keats, Eliot nor Dickinson. But I have done, and am doing, what I set out to do. A little rhyme here and there, a tear perhaps, a smile and sometimes the question, "Did I write that? Well done!" And the surprise at having written once again, the well not dry.

Dave Muxó-McPherson
January 2026

The Crystal Prison



In the room

*"In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo" - T. S. Eliot*

Like standing stalks of corn they rustle
In the wind, their words like silken fingers
Reaching out.
But there are panes of plexiglass
Between them, keeping out and keeping in,
A labyrinth of loneliness.
They wander here and there with Pirandello on
Their lips, crystal people
In a land of mirrors.
Who is real
And who is duplication?

They reflect into infinity, eternal.

A winter wind, their words swirl down
The hallways of my soul and try
Each padlocked door.
Indifferent to them I talk of time and space.
Misunderstanding me they measure
Circumstance.

I wait, within my crystal cave.
These seven singing virgins
With these seven youths
Approach their sacrifice, and are consumed.
Separately they pass away,

A silence hangs like tapestries
Across the universe.

Alone, I dream the coming of
my Theseus.

A Coward's Lament

I think that I shall go away. No, run away,
and think till I can think no more about you.

I shall be honest with myself
and read the writing on the wall.

I dreamed you as I walked the corridors of adolescence.
I caressed your hair and wrote a thousand lines.
I made love to you long before I made love at all.

You were the friend I would have loved, the lover
I would have liked, but you were young and far away.

You have had so many names. You were my Dulcinea
and my Juliet. And now you come into my life,
too late, too soon, and test the crystal prison
which I built when life was not my friend.

You are the summer breeze which swirls the hallways
of my soul and melts the faces that I labored long
to mask my nakedness.
Your name is Theseus and Juliet.

Yes, I shall run away
and dream again.

I am the waiting page

I am the waiting page,
poetry unborn.
From infinity
you gather sounds
to seed my waiting garden.
Your love creates
my lexicon.
And as the gentle
rains of inspiration
fall to earth
my universe is fixed
in sacred imagery.

A flower blooms

A flower blooms
across the room.
She was an actress
at one time.
She lived a thousand
lives, a thousand
tragedies, and
still she smiles.

As if to speed my slow decay

As if to speed my slow decay
I breathe more deeply,
And hope I may
Accelerate the wasting
Rhythm of my life.

It was so long ago
That I was young,
And yet my eyes have
Never been so clear.
Last Saturday I saw a sail
That for the mist
The others could not see.

Last night I saw you
just as clearly
In my memory.
We lay like sea shells
On the edge of dreams
And talked of our
First tenderness.
Your loving fingers traced
A starfish in my palm.
Long since the years have
Struggled to erase that
Sacred rendering.

And now,
Too long a lonely player

On an empty stage,
I dream the final curtain.
The scene has lasted long,
And still plays on.

I walk along the beach again

I walk along the beach again;
my eyes swim in the waning sun.
They dance along the waves;
a loving waltz, a ritual round
to summon you to my side once more.
And yet I stand alone, the music
of the surf somehow not right.

I hum the tune we shared
and try to feel your warmth once more.
The gulls join in, but cannot
save my dying song.
The silence strains my ears.
Alone again, walking on our beach,
I am myself.

Like lovers

Like lovers strolling on a quiet beach
our words reveal their secret dreams.
They hesitate, then glide around each
other in a ritual round.

It's funny

It's funny how our time goes on and on.
The hands of grandpa clock move round
So slowly, and yet it seems our time
Speeds on as though it flies to win
some all-important race.
And we, small creatures that we are,
forfeit all to keep abreast of time.
And funny how we never really
try to penetrate our logic.

It is the quiet time

It is the quiet time, when evening
shadows stretch like kittens half awake.

Rose-colored clouds announce
the end of day;
the resting earth begins to sigh
and dreams remembered
or imagined loves.

The sea recounts a thousand tales
on myriad shores; an old man
home from the wars with marvels
on his lips.
His whispers, hoarse with age,
escape our untrained ears
and disappear.

And Love?

The scarce-felt brush
of young
and willing lips. Her
Hand in yours
and whispered words
of praise, a
Summer breeze though
soft and
flowing
Hair.

A sigh to
hide a hope of lasting love
and then a
Tear to
streak her
velvet cheek.

Yes love, as
tender as a
new-spread leaf,
As true as
Truth itself
and strong,
as
right as life and
sweet.

The Telegram

Dear madame, we regret to say
Your son has died today,
Your valiant son has died.
We've cried and cried
(We'll bury him
And heave a hollow sigh,
And then we'll dry your
Pleading eyes.)

We've cried and cried.

*Mother,
I feel so light.
Can I come home?
Oh please, don't lock the door.
I feel so light.*

Dear madame, we regret to say
Your son has died today.
(The earth around his grave
Will cry for us.)

How sad

How sad to lose a dream;
to be a fallen knight
upon the field of honor
at the end of day.

How sad to try to mend a broken lance
and know that it will never be
the same again; not new, not terrible
upon the wearied adversary's shield.

How sad to watch the daylight slip away;
to have the chilly fingers of the night
upon my heart; indifferent stars
upon my eyes like mocking pennies
on a lonely corpse.

How sad the darting fireflies around
my head like chanting candle flames.

How sad to have no mourners at my last
life's day; no friends to note
the natural look upon my waxen face.

How sad it is to lose the only dream
worth fighting for upon that lonely field;
to lie alone and spill my blood
upon the adversary's shield.

The Postcard from Berlin

My brother sleeps just there,
Beyond the wall.
Helped on to that eternal rest by a frightened
border guard in brown.
He has reward enough I guess for a weary
life hard-spent.
I suppose he was a gentle man and loving son,
a party man almost until the end.
But I saw his democratic face before he died
just there, beyond the wall.

He had the look of freedom in his eyes,
(They said he looked
just like himself, a freckled imp caught
stealing grandma's cookies
from a colored jar) and yet his crooked smile
just there
below his neatly trimmed mustache
betrayed his democratic eyes.

I tried to shed a tear for him just now;
instead a crooked smile
came to my trembling lips. I understood
his eyes, I liked
his pinstripe suit, too small just here,
too long just there,
and I wished that I could sleep a hero's sleep
beyond the wall.

Buried Under the Wall

*"Something there is that doesn't
love a wall." - Robert Frost*

If I were a better man, and
had the courage to see the Wall,
I would run my fingers over
its smooth black surface.
It would be cold,
this world's largest tombstone.
I would look for my buddy's name,
and then for mine.

I would look for the America
I knew before the music died;
I do not think I would find it
among the "A" names there.
Like my fallen friends,
like my innocence,
this land, my land, from the
purple mountains majesty
to the California islands
is buried under the Wall.

If I were a better man,
I would turn to watch
the children dance
with flowers in their hair.
They would not remember

my friends, or me,
or my America,
the way it used to be.

I remember

I remember
when the earth stood still
for us,
and when the night moved on
to tell of love that time
could not fulfil;
To dim the warm light in your eyes
and prove
that time must govern each small heart
and keep young love and love apart.

When I look into your eyes

When I look into your eyes I see eternity.

I see a starry, starry Texas night in front of Grandma's house.

The giggles all died down, and on an old grey mattress-fort

we camped with Grandpa in the wilderness. Father showered us with

shooting stars. They fell into our eyes and danced into our hearts.

I loved the universe that night, and love it still.

And how I long to dance among the shooting stars again.

I hear the whispers of the trees. In the velvet hours they go about their sacred stewardship. They walk the hills with me

and talk of heroisms past. They can't resist a chuckle at some long-forgotten,

just-remembered joke they played. They keep me safe along my way

and make my search for innocence and love less lonely for a time.

I feel the breath of God move through the grove. He sits beside me

on a rough-hewn wooden plank and listens to my friends, who one by one

bear testimony. How proud He is of them, and caught in his joy He weeps,

for we are Zion's youth. And then a different tear.

I understand how much He misses us,
and how He must console our Mother in their quiet
times.

I touch a weathered photograph, my precious daughter
standing in my
shoes. So big that she can't walk, they anchor her and
keep her safe.
For me they're just as large. They're Father's shoes, lent
to me for a time, and how I pray to fill them well.

I scold my darling little boy in church and take him out.
He doesn't
understand the meeting's reverence, and as he cries he
fills me with
his tears. I turn away. I would have him know how much
I hurt to
see him cry, and how I weep now as I write these words,
but I'm his dad
and must be strong until he understands.

I smell the blossom on the rose, and marvel how its
beauty pales beside your smile. This is a special place
and has the touch of
Mother everywhere. I hear the swish of lace and satin
as she moves.
This is Her garden, and she has brought you here to
make it yours.
And when you bring your daughters to this special place
they'll know
that Mother loves them by her handiwork.

In my loneliness

In my loneliness I think of you,
and though I am far away (a million miles?)
your presence dances in my eyes
to light my memories.

(Sweet memories, fond words
sleeping on a perfumed page
until I wake them with my glance.)

I watch old movies and I think of you
(as though they were yours and mine somehow).

I sigh a little when the hero rides
into the sunset with his love.

I sometimes ride into that sun,
and memories of you slip through my mind
like loving fingers through my hair.

Come . . .

. . . sit here with me by the fire
and talk a while, and let the warm
reflections fall upon your hair.

. . . remember yesterdays with me
until the fire falls asleep with us
before the coming winter dawn.

. . . sing a song of love now
sealed upon the altar of eternity
within these hallowed temple walls.

Come Sit with Me

My love,
come sit with me
for just a moment
and listen to my heart.
It would speak to you
for just a while.
It's late, I know,
and you have things to do;
A list made out and waiting.
But sit a while
and listen to my heart.
It would gladly give
its life for love just now.

Have I told you how
the light falls on your cheek
just so, and how your eyes
still sparkle
in the evening shadows?
Have I told you how
my heart would sing for yours,
and how my fingers long
to touch your hair . . .

But go ahead, I'll wait.
Some other time, when all the
world's asleep, and your
clock's not running quite
so fast, my love.

If I could only be like Bogie

If I could only be like Bogie,
 love'em and leave'em
 (Here's lookin' at you, kid)
 instead of gettin' left at the
 startin' gate.

If there could always be Paris
 and the memory of you.

If I could walk away the hero
 --just once,--
 and not the fool
 who declares undying love
 to Miss Cantwejustbefriends?

(You'll meet the girl for you

```

          s
        s o m
      s o m e d
    s o m e d a y
      m e d a y
        d a y
          y
  
```

you'll see.)

If I could just once
 keep to myself for a while;
 mmmellowwww out (for sure).
 Maybe I could wake up

just one morning and
not have to shave with the
light off
(so I wouldn't have to look at
[F L E S Y M | M Y S E L F]).

To find a friend

To find a friend,
a smile across the room,
a shoulder
when the world
has been unkind.

To find a friend
who lets me be
a friend,
who sees when I am
blinded by myself
and speaks the truth
when I would hear
a lie.

To find a friend
who knows just when
to hold me close,
and when I would be free.

How carefully

How carefully we speak,
trying not to be too serious.
And yet
life is a serious business.
Each second life and death
a breath away.

How delicate the dance
we call this life.
How light the steps
we learn
at mother nature's knee.
We would be graceful dancers
in Swan Lake, but we
have two left feet.
A breath away eternity
awaits, and smiles.

I think of you

I think of you
when you are far away
upstairs, or in the study
reading life
between the words and lines
of poetry.
My thoughts tiptoe away
in search of yours.

Your smile

Your smile reminds me of a party
from the secret corners of my youth.
How awkward I must have been, and looked.
How silly in a shirt too big (at least the collar was),
my tie too long, though I had practiced
in the mirror that whole afternoon.
Of course my loafers squeaked.
My socks were white, my hair slicked back
(the wet head hadn't dried as yet, you understand),
my fly unzipped (Melissa liked to see me squirm,
and always found a way to tell me all the things
my best friend would not tell).
But I knew my mortal coil had shuffled off
when Cynthia Smythe Hyphen Jones
(be still my heart!) refused to dance with me.
I sank into despair. Then, suddenly, there you were
(your smile, you understand, not you)
across the room. A smile like yours and I was
Alan Ladd or Robin Hood, the frog transformed.
Adventure waited while I held my breath.
The rest is history.

Twilight

Twilight.
I look into your eyes
and feel
the stirring breeze,
a baby's breath
light upon the breast
of mother nature's son.
I feel the movement
of the stars around
the soul of time,
a royal wedding waltz
now scarce begun,
now gliding free
upon the water's face
to celebrate
a love new found.

I Catch the Sun

In my eyes I catch the morning sun
While in my heart I sing a song of love.
I think of you and in my soul I harmonize.

The sun and you, warm as southern breezes,
Beautiful and sweet.

I catch you both in outstretched fingers
And hold you fast against my lips.
I taste the honey of your laugh, gentle
As the loving rays of life caressing me.

I am alive in you, and you are life in me.
Like the sun, we shine for all eternity.

I'm told

I'm told the centuries lie waiting
in the bushes.
Do I dare pass by?
I've slept this way before, or crept.
It didn't matter then,
Nor should it matter now.

Creeping, sleeping,
Sliding through the ages.
I'll get there by and by.
I'll meet you there.
How wise you'll be for waiting,
And older, too.

Waiting for You

like waiting for the top of the hill
when I can't see for the clouds,
or having the sea breeze in my eyes
when land is what I long to see

like having an itch where I can't scratch
or a hunger I can't satisfy

like waiting for the shoe to drop
or the water to boil, the grass to grow
like watching for the sun to go down,
or come up, or not move so slow

like tasting a word on the tip of my tongue
or waiting for that perfect thought
like hoping that the the love I bring
will be enough to fill your heart

like standing in the rain all day
waiting for the sun to shine

like watching through the window drapes
as far as I can see
to catch a glimpse of your sweet face
before you can see me.

Angkor Wat

Oh, to remember the tender feelings I had here,
The peace, the mist, the still hanging light now dim.
And yet the world intrudes, the sounds I hear
Draw me away, hijack my soul, bind my mind, a sin
Against my dreams.

The temple face looks back at me with the ecstasy
Of peace, belonging, in the infinite family of time.
The wisdom of the ages in a knowing glance I see
Behind those half-closed eyes. Their stare combines
Against my dreams.

I made the music stop

I made
the music
stop, I know.
I wish I were
a violin.
I could sing
and perhaps
my harmonies
would move
the strings of
your heart
again.

I saw her pirouette

I saw her pirouette
around the soul of time.
When she turned her head
her eyes locked on
a point I could not see.
It was not me she saw
each time she turned
her head. I think it
was the love of dance
she saw, the thrill
of being perfect
for an instant in
the stream of life.

We mortals try to
pirouette as well.
Imperfectly we
turn dividing time
imperfectly. We miss
the turning points,
and fail to mark
the stream of choices
that we call our lives.

We see the ballerina's
hard won pirouette
a challenge undeniable.
We would catch our
turning points but are

untrained. And yet
at life's last day
our lives are
precious still.
Unmarked, our loves
dance with us in our
memories.

Her whispers

Her whispers
Touched my mouth as
Lovingly as kissing fingertips.
We lay together,
The darkness covering
Our silence as
Mac Arthur Park caressed my eyes
And ears, unseen, unheard,
A hymn to love and loneliness,
My soul's companion.
Carelessly her lips brushed mine,
Her tears flowed freely
In my eyes, stained my cheek,
Then fell to earth, and lightly,
Gently, flowing deathward,
Cast a sigh in my direction.

On Randi's Death

I thought
that I could
will you into
every leaf,
see you in
every glance,
taste your breath
in every breeze.

I thought that we
would spend a
quiet afternoon
around the lake
from time to time.

I thought
that I would taste
your tears
in every drop
of rain.
But evening's
sunset
shows me once
again
that you are gone.

I cannot will you
into life.

And each morning's

sunrise tells me
that you won't be
coming back again.

Smothered by the Past 1

Like a wave
silently
behind me
sneaking up
breaking in
heart beating
blood pumping
flood sneaking up
behind me
ready to smother
another time
again
but new
not again really
then love
a kiss
a squeeze
my hand in yours
and not
smothered
by the past
this time.

Smothered by the Past 2

We dance
around each other
barely touching,
lost in each
other's thoughts.
Gliding through
a smile, a tear
perhaps of joy,
a nervous glance
behind
to make sure
we aren't
smothered
by the past.

Loneliness

Loneliness is silence.
It's when you have to
have the TV on, or
music to remind you
that you are alone.

Loneliness is sitting
at a table with no one
to pass the salt, no one
to tell you no, you've had
too much already.

Loneliness is talking to
yourself just to hear a voice.
And answering yourself to
know that you are right, or
wrong, or haven't got a clue.

It's when you're reading
something so amazing that you
want to share with someone
who pretends to match your
interest with a smile.

Loneliness is waiting for
a call that never comes
from those who say they care
for you as much as you
say you care for them.

Loneliness is sitting
in the corner silent while
the family children laugh
and play and don't really
care who you are.

Loneliness is when your opinion is
unwanted, your voice is unheard,
your stories have all been told
before, and your taste in music
is appreciated when you are
alone.

The Talking Head

The commentator shared
that fit to share.
The sound was off.
His lips were moving,
so I guess the news
was not so fit to hear.

He saw a picture
on the screen of nothing
worth the seeing.
It didn't say a thing
to him; his face, some
teeth, two lips,
an ear hearing nothing
worth the hearing.

So much space behind
his teeth, an empty mouth,
with nothing left to say
that anyone will hear.
They listen to him
with the sound turned off.
Nothing worth the hearing.

The Weather Girl

The eight year old sits
on a hill just west of town,
watching giant cotton
figures drift from west
to east, a little faster
than the sun but slower
than the whispers that the
wind makes in her ears.

She fills her lungs and
plans the weather for the
day. A little rain in town,
some wind along the lake.
The checkered fields will
welcome sunlight strong
and warm all day. Her bees
will navigate the blossoms,
and then will dance into the
hive.

Her fingers open up the
breakfast mother made at dawn,
and as she eats she changes
figures in the sky to suit
her whims. The sky is hers,
the wind and rain and sun
obey her will. The flowers
greet the day because she
is the weather girl.

A Book

To hold it in my hand,
to feel the weight of wings
upon the page, wonderful
mental shadows roaming through
the leaves bound tightly,
stitched and glued between
the covers front and back.

I pause, lids shut tight,
images created behind my
eyes by letters transformed
as if by magic into words.
Thoughts which fill the
space between the sounds
which could be heard
if anyone were speaking.

Between the covers first
and last the King has died.
A love so strong has listless
grown beneath the jeweled sky.
A mother's tear of joy slides
down a youthful cheek and stains
the ivory leaf between the
covers first and last.

A magic box could not so precious
be. The wonders of the book can
steal into our hearts as silently

as wisps of smoke into our eyes,
and leave us memories of things
that we have never done, of places
we have never been, and images
of things that we will never see.

My Emily

*"Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed"*
- Emily Dickinson

Emily, we know each other you and I.
Our souls have met, and seen the
thoughts which hide behind our eyes.

From your solitude you won the hearts
of those who could not know your mind,
nor could see beyond their puzzled eyes.

But I could see the Emily that you would
have me see, across the paper fields,
on which you grew your images from need.

Between Two Galaxies

Perhaps it's time to take
the pictures down.
Move on they say,
but not to where or when.

Last night I viewed the
final episode, a TV show
of which I've seen two hundred
episodes, a lifetime
on the screen.

Move on I say, but not
to where or when.
I miss those made-up characters
as though they were my flesh
and blood, or my life-long dream
now dead.

Floating in the space
between two galaxies,
I'm in a lonely place
to be alone.

Time to find new family,
new episodes to fill
the void
between two galaxies.

Old Friends

Now and again
the old songs
visit our hearts
with tenderness,
like old friends
whose absence is
compressed by
memories come to
life in a smile.

Melodies heard
again, not quite
the same because
our memories are
dimmed by years
apart. It matters
not, the feeling
lives the same.

A love long lost
is felt anew within
the melodies that
filled our hearts
so long ago. Our
arms recall embraces
felt and stored
so lovingly within
the songs we loved.

The notes remind us
of the impish grin
she wielded
shamelessly,
the nervous pressure
of his hand upon her
waist when dancing
in the gym in socks.
Love and music were
much simpler then,
and innocence was
sweet.

Our music and our
memories walk hand
in hand along the
paths of life. They
live for each other,
friends to help in
time of need,
companions in our
joy, siblings in
our sorrow.

Why him?

He doesn't know why the world
has been unkind.

He planted paper flowers in a vase
and put them in his living room.
He talked to every one each day.
The flowers didn't grow.
He even watered twice a week, but
the color ran and formed a brownish
puddle underneath which stained
his imitation marble table top, the
one the polyester-suited salesman
with a bad toupee told him would
never stain.

He doesn't know why they didn't grow.

When He got out of school he bought
a spiffy new guitar and case.
He ran his fingers over every string
a hundred times, polished the wood
until it shone like a beacon
in the dark, bought every guitar how-to
book he found and read it twice.
But the guitar never played a note.
Just sat there for thirty years
and mocked him with it's silent stare.
He doesn't know why it wouldn't play.

He married young and went to work,
came home each day and watched TV

until he went to bed.
His wife abandoned him and took the kids,
left him in the dark without a meal
or clothes to wear or even a good-bye.
She found a better man, she said.
The shrink he went to wouldn't give him
meds, and she abandoned him as well.
She said he didn't know what love can be
but he knew that she was wrong.
He doesn't know why his wife and children
wouldn't stay.

Some day he'll have the time to
think this through, but not today.
He has his Facebook things to say,
baby pics and loving dogs to like
before he flames their owners for their
errant views on politics.

Someday the world will change its mind
and figure out it doesn't have to be
unkind to him.

He doesn't know why the world
has been unkind.

The Wedding Dancers

Smoothly She glides
not touching the floor,
as elegant as He is handsome.
The Wedding Dancer, in her
gown of white, her veil a
trane, a wisp behind her
dancing as well two steps
obediently behind.

Regally she sits in honor's seat,
a velvet voice to calm the fears,
the troubled looks around the
room. The words are wisps of smoke
devoid of substance filling every
eye with witchery. She crushes a
rebelious thought with gentle smiles
which follow obediently behind.

Confidently she strides into
the room, in charge at once
among the vassals all now
seated, now hanging on the
words that she would say if
there were any need. Her command
is in her steely stare, the
wave of her hammered scepter
following obediently behind.

Slowly she walks the garden path
and waves to distant puzzled stares,

a royal empty wave, now floating
directionless upon the breeze
like distant smoke upon the trees
on yonder rolling hills. Her thoughts
intrude, a fleeting moment of the
past which now remains obediently
behind.

On the lonely bed that death has laid for
her, she lies so still that one would
think her life had gone. But even now
upon that ancient visage lies the hard
won will of iron forged in fires of
adversity. With patience little shown
to others of her lofty state the fabled
reaper waits obediently behind.

In another bed another wedding dancer
lies so still that one would think her
life had gone. Upon her visage rests the
undiminished beauty shared with each new
loving soul she bore; a happy payment for
a life well-loved. And as her children
hover round, death reverently awaits
the dancer's time.

The other side of the door

Through my mist of memory
I see your face darkly, yes,
but deeply nonetheless.

Suspended in forever you see me
as well, but clearly as though
through glass, on the other side
of time looking in.

Prisoner of time, I await
the summer wind beneath me,
the sighing of the mountains
blue and green.

You are the timeless whispers
I can barely hear, murmurs
floating in a sea I cannot leave.

I saw your eyes on someone else
sometime between a yesterday and now.
She didn't know that she was you,
and looked an apprehensive look at me.

One day this butterfly will leave its
sleep in time, spread its wings and
fly to you above the
mountains blue and green.
I will be your Cheshire cat
and you will be my somewhen queen.

I hope that when I die

I hope that when I die
I hear the songs we loved again.
Perhaps a tear or two and
memories of who we were.

To think that all we've been and done
will pass away is more than we can bear.
That must be why we cling to life
much longer than we feel the need.

I don't believe that dying is the end
of anything. Another life, another
place, another time is where we'll be.

But I hope we have old songs to be
our well-worn sweaters gathered close,
as soft and warm as winter socks
before a crackling fire.

Disposable life

Too young, too old
of no use to anyone any more

kill the young, too much trouble
for the modern woman
just tissue anyway, not life
fingers and toes, a beating heart not life any more
disposable in a disposing world

kill the old, more trouble than they're worth
sick and old, taking up the space we need
the food we eat and air we breathe
call it assisted suicide
throw them out with the garbage
disposable in a disposing world

and in the middle, waiting for them to come for you
too tall, too small, not right in the head
not politically correct any more
coming for you next
disposable in a disposing world

who will watch your back when no one loves you
any more

Catch a Wave

I sit beside the sea
and listen to her words,
a constant stream,
sometimes a muted roar,
sometimes a whisper
mellowed on the shore.

Her children rest
and are embraced
once more. Renewed
they come again
like surfers on
their perfect wave.

At times she doesn't
notice me, so busy
with her offspring
that my thoughts
sound muffled to
her ears.

Her infant waves,
too small to join their
siblings beyond the break
in mother sea, come close
and kiss me in her place.

Interrupted

I have a new TV
which tells me
when I've seen enough.
Turns off without
a word of warning
in the middle of
a gasp, a sigh,
or even silence in
a look I will be
able to forget.

Like a love just lost
the feeling's gone.
I can't return to
see who sighs or dies
or wanders through a
field of lies, a
strain of haunting
music overdubbed. I
will forget the feelings
that I had when
my TV told me that
I'd seen enough.

My life's a string of
episodes like pearls
around my heart. They
glitter in the dark left
to me by the box now
painted black, and light

my contemplations and
my aspirations not yet
realized.

There will be time
if time allows to
visit all the scenes stacked
on the shelves from Faulkner
and the other friends I've
never met.

A fan boy of ideas
I wish that I could call
my own, I wrestle with
the words so perfectly
distilled among their
ordered paragraphs
like worlds created by the gods
and strings of episodes
hung in my mind.

Among the me and we
and us, the ether slips
between our teeth
one final time.
We lie together each to each
in this our mental mortuary.
Our strings of episodes
play separate behind
our eyes, waiting for our
mortal TV screens to tell
us that we have watched
enough.

Chance Meeting

Quite by chance we met
along a winding jungle trail,
the silence shattered by
a single rifle shot.

So close they could have been
our brothers if they weren't
in front of us and shooting back,
just doing what they had to do.

We all had families who wept
for us in different languages.
We were remembered as we were,
not as we had become.

Below Carl Sandburg's grass
we lie together now as
enemies who paid the cost.
We do not care who won or lost.

The Little Man



1

The little man stands
in the corner gathering
colors with his camera.
Like a spider leaving webs
he weaves his shadows
everywhere.

He is invisible
because he wants to be.
But if you look askance,
he is the movement
you just miss,
that which you
could have seen,
had you looked
an instant earlier.

All day he steals
the colors in the room,
until at last he
brings the night,
and suffocates us
into sleep.
We lie transfixed with
pennies on our eyes
until the dawn
drives him away
for just a little while.

And then when
we are safe
he comes again,
just out of sight,
just out of mind,
just in the shadow
in the corners
of our lives.

2

The little man stands
in the corner gathering
colors with his camera.
Tenderly he guards each shade,
each tinted shadow
a treasured token of the light.
And when he dreams he adds
his technicolored tones
to our fantasies.

3

The little man sits
in a darkened
hall watching
dancing images.
He shares his popcorn
with his girl and
life is good.
He marvels
at his colors
on the screen.
He will make
his movie too,
and call it
The Little Man
and Jan.

4

The little man
stood in the corner
gathering colors
with his camera.

She could not see him,
though she knew
he must be there.
She wet her lips,

and looked her
Mona Lisa look
for him.

Almost finished,
he filed her lips away
and then her
pretty blues.
Her lashes were so long
they almost
didn't fit.

She moved
without a sound,
a breeze
almost unfelt.
He could not
look away,
but caught
the moving air
and held it close.
He could not store
it in his camera.
Their souls
embraced again,
a loving velvet
hand in glove.

Separately
they sighed
and went

their separate
ways.

They did not
say goodbye.

5

The little man stands
in the corner gathering
colors with his camera.
The sacred mechanism
purrs and then
is silent once again.
He strokes it tenderly
and then they slip away,
two kittens prowling
into dreams,
not here, not there
but somewhere in between.

6

The little man stands
in the corner gathering
colors with his camera.
He spies the woman
with the dancing eyes.
Waving her hand
she dismisses his love
so carelessly
that his heart sinks,
losing all hands.

7

the little man
stands in the corner
capturing colors
with his camera.

just yesterday
he held his breath
and stepped into
the light.
she smiled a
different smile
at him,
at least he
thought she did.

he clicked
and whirred
and tried to
capture her.

now she hides
her pretty blues
behind those
mile-long lashes,
then with a
slow and sumptuous
tango-glide she
slides away.

she did not smile today

8

The little man
lies in the dark
and dreams again.
and as he dreams
he fills
the universe
with colors
from his camera.

he sees the woman
with the Mona Lisa smile.
a little girl,

she walks the sky.
her toes kiss
every blade
of grass
as though
she knew them
every one.

she dances
through the night
and touches
moonbeams with
her outstretched
fingertips.
her upturned
lips caress
the stars
as though
she loved them
every one.

child of
the moonlight,
the woman
sleeps among
the movements
of the trees.

the little man
awakes and she
is gone again.

9

The little man
sits at a table in the corner.
He listens to the
symphony of nouns
and verbs and
dangling participles.
What do they mean?
They have no shade
no tint, no hue.
How do they live
without the glue
that binds the
universe together?

The people
swirl around the room.
They move their mouths
but there is no color
in their sounds,
no understanding
in their discourse.

They babble like a brook
who seems confused,
and can't remember
what she thought
to say.

10

The little man sits
in the corner.
He would rather be
collecting colors
with his camera,
but today,
head down
looking at his knees
he contemplates.
His eyes are empty,
his mind is still,
his heart is barely
stirring.

*To capture
what I cannot see,
how wonderful
that would be
if only that could be.*

But no,
beyond his fingertips
the voice of God
dissolves again
into the colors
of the breeze.
The promise
of another when,
another where,

is whispered
in the trees.

11

The little man
sits in the corner
with his camera.
The room is dark.
There is no sound
except the beating
of his heart,
keeping time,
measuring the
pulsing stillness
of the air.

She didn't
come today
nor yesterday.
How many heartbeats
has it been?
Could it be
it was her smile
that made his
camera sing?

12

The little man
stands in the corner.
He wants to gather
colors with his camera.

But something strange
has happened, something
hanging in the air
not right, the light
not colored for a
morning such as this.

The room is lonely,
there is no sound, and
yet it is not sound
his camera needs
so desperately.

It is the yellow morning
light it craves.

But still the sounds
he cannot hear
are whispering inside
his ears like Siren
songs calling him
from rocky shores.

Unnoticed, his camera slinks
away into the silence.

13

The little man
stands in the corner
without his camera.

Eyes closed,
he listens for the
sounds she makes,
the tones and
intonations
that populate his
new-found world.

He hears a gentle
resonance of movement
and she is there,
a loving smile
below her mile-longs
just for him.

The little man
steps out into
the light.

Epilogue

A somewhen later,
relatively speaking,
the little man stands
in the shadows
of his corner,
no longer with a
camera to record
the colors now long gone.

The new found sounds
and whispers of her words
unheard, he cradles
in his arms a magic book
with symbols lightly printed
on its autumn leaves.

He will learn the language
of the cryptic characters
sleeping there, and awake
them with his finger tips
which slide from
left to right,
a tango glide of
mile-long lashes
across the page.

The world awaits
new technicolored dreams
rescued from a
where and when
long past.

Songs from the Heart



Songs from the Heart

Written from the soul
the words slide across
the page and mean more
than what they mean.

Like brush strokes from
calligraphy the meanings flow,
and if we glance away we miss
the text beneath the text.

Ink drying on a velum bed
can sleep too soundly, and we
miss the song which drifts
into our lack of understanding.

There is a cosmic trick to see
what others cannot see. It takes
persistence in the numbing now
to learn what others do not know.

Songs from the heart are sung by
those who gather one by one
the sounds not heard by those
who only want to hear
themselves.

Sister of the Moon

The sounds of night surround her
as she walks; the whisper of her flowing
hair blends with the creature sounds.
Pale moon glow lights her way, falls
upon her upturned face, touches her body
forming gleaming shadows, shifting shapes.
She is the mirrored moon, a silver spirit
who walks the night in silence.

I hear her calling in my heart of hearts,
My soul of souls responds to the rhythm
of her breath, to the beating of her heart.
I feel a pulse below my conscious world,
a calling sense which draws me deeper
into dreams,
enticing me to lose myself.

Already I am lost. The moonlight fills me
as I listen to that silent voice.
I will walk the mountains of
the moon, my footfalls echoing hers precisely.
I will be sister of the moon.

Nowhere Man 1

Who was the man who sat at dawn
to break his fast in this old chair?
Was he large, a boisterous laugh
with dancing eyes or thinning hair?

Did a shadow cross the waning sun,
a Clemens comet track the evening sky?
Who knew the time or day he left
or when he closed his aged eyes?

He was one soul among the faceless crowd,
A man who spoke, but no one ever heard.
His loss of little note, he's hardly missed,
an unknown heart among the heartless herd.

An unknown man, his foreign parentage is hinted.
A two-line eulogy was all the paper printed.

I'm Looking Through You

She said she saw right through him
as though he weren't there.
She saw the things he couldn't see.
The things she couldn't bear.

A ghost, he moved in shadows deep
transparent to her eyes.
He did not care to see her weep
remembering his lies.

Nowhere Man 2

I saw a man hurrying
to get nowhere,
he hadn't a clue
what to do
next.

Not a plan, wandering
quickly
so as not to fall
behind. How will
he know when
he arrives?

Paperback Writer

He always wanted to be a writer
but he didn't want to write.
Too much effort for a guy
like him.

Imagination is what he lacks,
the great American novel
not rattling around the emptiness
inside his head.

But he can write a line
and rhyme at times as well.
Perhaps he'd write a book of poems,
if only he could spell.

Yesterday

I saw you in the mirror
just yesterday,
looking back at me
a puzzled stare.
Do you know where
you are?

If I could turn back
to yesterday,
have you answer me
when I speak,
kiss me when I brush
your cheek,
I would.

But finding yesterday
is not that easy.
It is the secret place
within my mind
that I may never find.

We can work it out

Talking past each other
seeing what they want to see
is what they do.

Ships passing in
the night
bright as lights
in the dark,
but they can't see
each other's eyes
behind the colored
glasses.

Like molecules
they bounce around
their charged attraction,
getting no where
fast.

They like to think
that they control their
lives, decide who
lives and dies
or where they spend
their status.

Walking past each other
thinking what they want to
think
is what they do.

Moon Shadow

Walking with you
after dark
your moon shadow
next to mine
somehow.

So quiet that I
could hear you breathe
if you were here.

I reach out
but find only night
where your hand would
be,
if you were here.

Helplessly Hoping

The book on her lap,
her eyes looking for
the answer which is
not there.
Her fingers brushing
lightly across the words
which cannot tell her
the answer which is
not there.

Daylight Again

A family divided, north and south,
the cost of freedom very personal.

The graves whisper to us
across the ages, freedom is
not free.

Our blood is proof. And yet
we think that we know more.

Meanwhile another grieving
mother by her young son's
fresh-dug grave cries out,
her tears a final fitting eulogy.

Judy Blue Eyes

She is the girl he should
have married.

Distracted, he chose
another
and when that fairytale
did not come true,
he chose another
once again.

She was a good woman
but not his
Judy Blue Eyes,
the girl he should
have married.

Fortunate Son

I was not a fortunate son.

Don't know who was.

I went when my country
called.

Lost some, won some,

died a little each time

one of my buddies fell.

Came home to wife and son

and died a little more

each day until no one

was left inside but me.

They say no one was home

when the doorbell rang.

Southern Cross

Standing by the weathered
freighter's rail
I listen to the whispers
of the waves.
I watch the moon as
she travels with us
southward.
The Southern Cross
accompanies her
as she walks, guards
her from the dangers
of the night.
My thoughts return to you,
my heart yearns
for your love once more.
I walked with you
until the last to guard
you from the world outside.
But in the end I could not
save your life nor mine.
And now, by the freighter's rail,
I listen to the longings
of your heart left with me
by your whispered final breath.
They are my Southern Cross,
and guide me home
to you once more.

One of Us

We were two,
east and west,
so different and yet
so much alike.
We learned that
we could be
two silver dollar sides
glinting in the light,
obverse, reverse,
standing on its edge.
Two into one.
A belted pair of pants
floating in the sun.
But all too soon
north to south,
light to dark,
a rocky footpath
through the park.
The belt undone
the silver dollar
dulls and falls.
One into two,
one waited for that thing
the other could not do.
We are east and west,
so different and yet
so much alike.

The End of the World

Some say the world has ended many times,
perhaps with Mayan cycles of the calendar,
or from a cosmic reset with a bang quite big.

But there are endings more common and more personal,
the little deaths of little consequence
each day from broken hearts and broken dreams.

Why does the sun still warm the face
but leave the heart both cold and numb
when love has died caused by a thousand cuts?

The birds still sing, the bees and insects
still do their diligence in ignorance. The
world has little changed and soon forgets.

Our lives are but one day, the past a shadow
and the days to come are but a dream. We have
the now, and nothing more than we can see.

The bundle of our life of days is an instant
of eternity, Someday we will remember
when we lived before this life of days.

The world of love will die and live revived,
the flowers in the spring reborn, like sunlight
dimmed regained at dawn, like life to be relived.

Poems in Spanish

Anoche

Anoche volvió el inmesurado llanto
de mi juventud.
De nuevo contemplé
a mi Dulcinea.
Su recuerdo
me besó la frente.

Amaneció.
Entre paralelos sueños columnarios
caminaban sacros literatos.
Discutían el destino
de mi amor.
Midieron pro y contra,
y llegando al extremo de su lógica
lo condenaron.

(Last night the anguish of my youth
returned. Again I saw my Dulcinea.
Her memory kissed my forehead.
Dawn came. Between parallel column-
ed dreams sacred literati walked dis-
cussing the destiny of my love. They
measured pro and con, and arriving
at the extremity of their logic, con-
demned it.)

En el Cuarto

Susurran en el viento como tallos de maíz.
Dedos sedeños, sus palabras se extienden.
Fracasan. Lloran.

Láminas de plástico les separan.
Previenen. Encierran.
Perfecto laberinto.

Deorientados, se extravían
personajes de Pirandello.
Cristalinos entre espejos,
se confunden con la realidad.

Como el cierzo
sus palabras giran por los corredores de mi ser.
Prueban cada puerta cerrada.
Inútil.

En mi cueva cristalina les espero,
las siete vírgenes
y los mozos siete.
Se aproximan a la muerte y los consumo.
Uno por uno los suspiros se disuelven
en la nada.

Un silencio colgado como tapíz
a lo largo del universo.

Sólo, sueño con Teseo.

(This is the Spanish version of In the Room)

Las Trece Mil Trecientos Cinco Respuestas

Erase que se era una maestra encantada
que desde una torre altísima enseñaba
los misterios de la vida
y él amor al prójimo, y el
subjuntivo y los pores y paras,
y su majia y
su trabajo nunca terminaban.

Se veía por las noches platicando
con estrellas
conversando de programas
y ventanas
al futuro; aconsejando
a los príncipes y principiantes,
los terminantes, los por fin
salgodeaquies con la
palpable prueba piel de oveja.

Erase que se era una sonrisa
pegada dulcemente a lo Quevedo
a un angel . . .
Traía pues la salvación
al pecador ignorante de lo serio.
Traía pues la vida en los ojos,
el ser de las cosas,
y el estar de las almas
y cuando la cosa y cuando el alma
y siendo lo bueno y estándolo siempre
adjetivamente
por lo cierto.

Poetry Notes

A Flower Blooms

My first wife, Ana, was an actress before I met her, and she gave up her acting for marriage and children.

And Love?

An artist and I were discussing the creative process, and he drew a portrait while I wrote this poem. It was written quickly and without revision.

Angkor Wat

When I wrote this in 2000 it was the first poem that I had set out to rhyme since my high school days. Although I have been to Southeast Asia, I have never been to Angkor Wat.

Buried Under the Wall

After submerging my feelings for some thirty years about my time in Vietnam as a combat soldier, I saw the movie *Saving Private Ryan* and had sort of a mini-breakdown. I created a website with pictures of my service, and found the 35th Infantry Regiment Association and my friend Jerry Heiser. At some point I wrote this poem, not having seen the Wall as yet, and not sure that I ever would. I have been there several times since then, and it is always an emotional experience.

Come Sit With Me

Written in the style of "Andrea del Sarto" by Robert Browning, probably in my senior year of high school. I was young and didn't really know anything about the

pain Robert Browning was describing, although I thought that I did. After surviving two failed marriages, I am surprised to read the poem now and see how much it touches me. It is almost as if I could feel my future pain.

In the Room

The theme for this poem came from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T. S. Eliot, however mixed in with the modern style is the use of allusion to mythical characters, in this case the Minotaur in Cretan mythology. He is a half-human half-bull creature who lives in solitude, possibly captivity, in a cave. Regularly human sacrifices are made to him, seven virgins and seven young men. He laments his imprisonment, and compares his loneliness to that of the humans wandering lonely and disconnected from others. Hence the crystal cave and the separation imposed by their imprisonment in plexiglass. The Minotaur dreams about Theseus, the man who will penetrate the cave and kill him, releasing him at last from his torment.

I saw her pirouette

Written for my friend Lee Wilson, retired ballerina and dancer on Broadway, upon the publication of her book, *Rebel on Pointe*.

It's funny

As far as I remember, this poem was written when I was in high school. I still have the hand written version, stained by what probably was my lunch.

Songs from the Heart

I began writing these poems in 2021. Each one is based on the title of a song by my favorite musical artists; "Paperback Writer", "Yesterday", "Nowhere Man", and "We Can Work It Out" by the Beatles; "Moon Shadow" by Cat Stevens; "Fortunate Son", "Daylight Again", "Judy Blue Eyes" and "Southern Cross" by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young; "Sister of the Moon" by Fleetwood Mac and "The End of the World" sung by Skeeter Davis. Thematically only last two have close connection to the original song.

The Postcard from Berlin

I liked the sound of the phrase "just here...just there" so I wrote the poem around it. It was probably written around the time of the fall of the Berlin wall. I purposely played with the phrases "democratic face" and "democratic eyes" against the name of his prison-country, the German Democratic Republic.

The Telegram

Written after I returned from Vietnam in 1970. I was fortunate that only two of my friends and squad members were killed during my year in Vietnam.

Waiting for You

In the summer of 2013 I was engaged to Randi Riffkind in Los Angeles, and I wrote "Waiting for You." Several months later she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. I retired to care for her until she died at the beginning of 2014. After her death I wrote "On Randi's Death" and "Southern Cross". I left Los Angeles and decided not to return to the work force.

When I Look into Your Eyes

This poem was written for my second wife, Donna, before she and I had children. She loved the Bock Tower gardens in Florida, so I wrote about it, her, my two children from my first marriage, and memores from my childhood.



