



The Crystal Prison  
The Little Man

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Orem, Utah





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## Preface

It wasn't until High School that I discovered poetry. Of course, I fell in love with the Romantic poets; principally Keats and Shelley. Their suffering mirrored what I imagined was my own. If course, I didn't have any idea at the time what real suffering was.

Now when I read my first attempts at poetry I chuckle. Few have survived because they were too embarrassing to live. But a few fragments found their way into this volume.

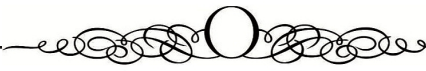
The idea for *The Crystal Prison* was born with the first poem presented here, "In the Room." I was concerned about the alienation of our industrial world. I could not foresee the present, and our Facebook generation with it's detached approach to relationships. Apparently there is nothing new under the sun.

Over the course of this book there is a stylistic arc; from carefully crafted but passionate poetry, full of allusions to mythical places and characters, to poetry which is less structured, simply-phrased and devoid of classical trappings.

In the second section of this volume you will find a series of twelve poems named *The Little Man*. They form a narrative and are typical of my present location on the stylistic arc that I mentioned. They are written quickly, without repeated revision, and in simple language. But most importantly, there is no correct interpretation of these poems. They are frames upon which you can hang your life experiences, making them your own.

Dave Muxó McPherson  
8 February 2016





# The Crystal Prison



## In the room

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

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.

### 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.

## 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.

## 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 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 disappears.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 fulfill;  
To dim the warm light in your eyes  
and prove  
that time must govern each small heart  
and keep young love and love apart.

## 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.

## 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 handywork.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 hair  
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 breast . . .

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;  
mmmmellowwww 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 ]).

### 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.

## 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.

## 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 wethead hadn't died 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.

## 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 moonglow 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.



## 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.

## How long will I love you

How long will I love you?  
When the seas have all run dry  
and there are no more stars  
the scent of my love will be  
sweet perfume across  
the universe.

## Waiting for You

like waiting for the top of the hill  
when I can't see for the clouds,  
or having the seabreeze 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.

## 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 always  
feel your eyes  
in every drop  
of rain.  
But each 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.



## 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  
to tell the earth that  
he's still here.

## Yesterday

I saw you in the mirror  
just yesterday,  
looking back at me  
a puzzled stare.  
Do you know where  
you are, or aren't?

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 will never  
find.

## Nowhere Man

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?

## 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.

Who are they 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.

## Fortunate Son

I was not a fortunate son.  
I don't know who was.  
I went when my country called,  
did not run and hide.  
I 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.

## 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  
you think that you know more.

A new reason to kill, and yet  
nothing is new, no argument  
any better than the last.

When will you learn that  
mother earth does not want  
to bury any more?

## 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.

## Judy Blue Eyes

She is the girl I should  
have married.  
Distracted, I chose another  
and when that fairytale  
did not come true,  
I chose another  
once again.  
She was a good woman  
but not my  
Judy Blue Eyes,  
the girl I should  
have married.

## Southern Cross

Standing by the 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.



## Anoche

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

Amaneció.  
Entre paralelos sueños columnarios  
caminaban sacros literaratos.  
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  
columned dreams sacred literai walked  
discussing the destiny of my love. They  
measured pro and con, and arriving at the  
extremity of their logic, condemned it.)

## La Prisión Cristalina

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

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

Desorientados, 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.

## aquí me afirmo

aquí me afirmo  
 rodeado  
     por el círculo  
 metalingüístico  
                             y mientras  
 se cierra cada vez más  
 marcando mi cuello  
                             como sogas  
 mis pies bucan tierra firme.  
 El signo se fractura,  
     se desintegra en mis ojos  
         como luz que se disuelve  
 morimos juntos desmembrados  
 El segundo nivel se escapa  
                             del primero  
 expandiendo y perdiéndose  
 la palabra que ya no es palabra.

( I affirm myself here, surrounded by the  
 metalinguistic circle, and while it closes in,  
 marking my neck like a noose, my feet search  
 for dry land. The sign fractures, desintegrates  
 in my eyes, like dissolving light. We die  
 together, dismembered. The second level  
 escapes from the first, expanding and losing  
 itself, the word which is no longer word.)

## Las Trece Mil Trescientos Cinco Respuestas

Erase que se era una maestra encantada  
que desde una torre altísima enseñaba  
los misterios de la vida  
y el amor al prójimo, y el  
subjuntivo y los pores y paras,  
y su magia 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  
salgodeaqués 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 and cuando el alma  
y siendo lo bueno y estándolo siempre  
adjetivamente  
por lo cierto.

Y Diós una tarde purpúrea le vino  
a la maestra aconsejadora angélica,  
María;  
e hizole una pregunta sola  
a la maestra gramaticalmente pura.  
Sin contestar a Gili y Gaya contestó.

Y los literatos vinieron tanteando  
el suelo con el bastón;  
hiciéronle una pregunta sola  
con trece mil trescientos cinco respuestas.  
Ni les contestó.

Y las estrellas le alabaron a la maestra Susana,  
a la encantada canciones cantaron, hosanas,  
porque entendían el valor de la sabiduría  
de la amada aconsejadora angélica,  
María.

(I created this poem in my sleep. When I woke up I wrote it down without changes. It is about a college counselor at the University of Maryland named Maria, who worked tirelessly counseling students and teaching Spanish Grammar, for which she was paid \$13,305.00 a year, referred to in the title. I considered it unjust, and so I wrote the poem and presented it to her.)



# 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  
moves 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 he 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  
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.

## 12

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.

## 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. This poem was written for her.

### And Love?

During my LDS mission to Central America, I had a companion in El Salvador who was an artist. One evening after coming back to our apartment for the evening, we started talking about the creative process for artists and writers. He drew a portrait based on a photo that I had, and I wrote this poem. We realized that our processes were similar, based on a beginning "line" or theme, and then development and expansion. This poem was written in 1964. Before I went home in 1965 a different missionary showed me a poem which he like, and it turned out to be this one. It had been passed from missionary to missionary and I didn't know anything about it.

### Angkor Wat

I usually don't rhyme my poetry except for special effect. I thought that it would be nice to have at least one rhymed poem in this volume.

### Buried Under the Wall

After submerging my feelings about my time in Vietnam for some thirty years, I saw the movie Saving Private Ryan, and had a kind of mini-breakdown. I created a website with pictures from 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. Several years later I found my self in Washington D.C. with my second wife, Donna. She dragged me to the Vietnam Memorial. The wall was just as I had imagined it, except that it was very hot to the touch since it was July.

### Come sit with me

Written in the style of "Andrea del Sarto" by Robert Browning, one of the poets who impressed me in high school.

### How long will I love you and Waiting for You

Written for Randi Riffkind, my sweetheart, fiancée and love of my life, who died of a brain tumor after we were engaged.

### In The Room

The inspiration for this poem came from T. S. Elliot's "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock", which had a profound effect on my poetry from my college years on. Both Elliot's themes and his techniques became part of my experimentation, until I developed my "style."

### I saw her pirouette

Written for my friend Lee Wilson, retired ballerina and musical 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 still in high school. I still have the hand written version, stained by probably what was my lunch.

### Paperback Writer through Southern Cross

These poems were written just before the publication of this volume. Each one is based on the title of a song by some of 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

Inspired by the Fleetwood Mac song, Sisters of the Moon.

### Smothered by the Past

The phrase "smothered by the past" was leant to me by a friend of rather short duration for these two poems.

### Southern Cross

Written for the second anniversary of the death of my fiancée, Randi Riffkind.

### The Postcard from Berlin

I came up with the "just here...just there" phrases first and wrote the poem around them. This may have been written at about the time that the Berlin wall came down.

### The Telegram

Written after I returned from Vietnam, this poem expresses my feelings about two of my squad members who had been killed by friendly fire.

### When I look into your eyes

I wrote this poem for my second wife, Donna, and my children from my first marriage, Patty and David. Rebekah and Michael had not been born as yet.

## Afterthoughts

I was watching a documentary on Youtube about the singing group of the seventies and eighties called ABBA. They have been one of my favorite singing groups since I discovered them, a little late I will admit, in 1984. I was working in Saudi Arabia, and I remember the first ABBA song that I listened to; The Day Before You Came. I was stunned. I had never heard anything like it.

I only learned in the documentary that ABBA was vilified during most of the time that they were recording for not being "serious" enough. That was the time of the Vietnam War and a multitude of social ills worldwide which occupied the attention of "serious" young people. ABBA was not serious. They wrote fluff, according to their critics. Luckily ABBA did not pay much attention.

The realization came to me that my poetry has been largely abba-esque. Although it is filled with emotion and angst, it is not political in the least. And therefore, it is not "serious." I have never attempted to have any of my poetry published in periodicals or magazines because I don't think that it is heavy enough. I seldom read modern poetry because it seems to me to be too politically relevant. While I care deeply about modern problems, I don't care to read about poverty, sickness, or global warming in poetic form.

I could be in worse company. Although pretty much ignored by today's youngsters, ABBA has finally reached a measure of acclaim for their music. I can only hope that there will be some of you who like my poetry, even though it is not serious.