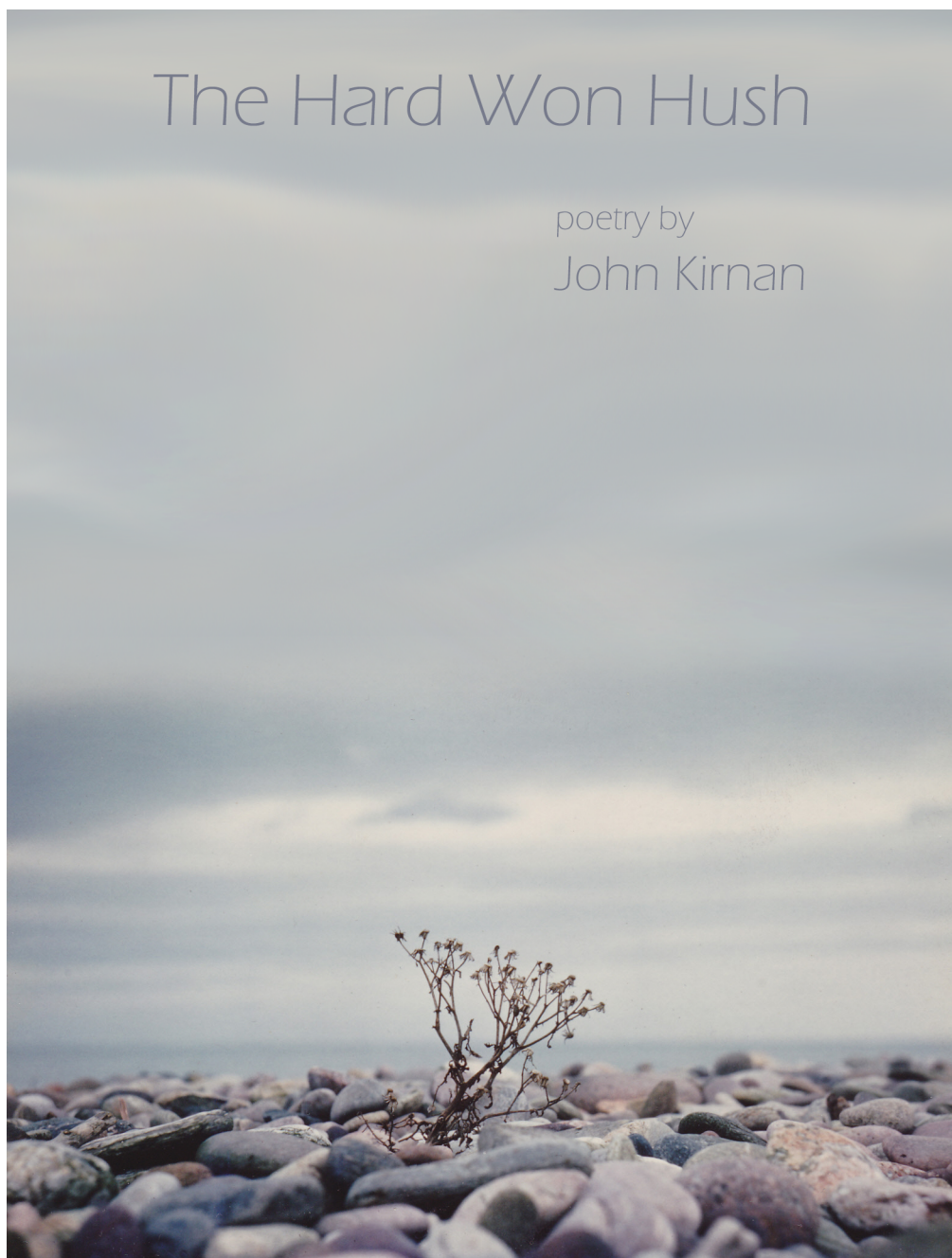


# The Hard Won Hush

poetry by  
John Kirnan



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Oyate Wo'Wapi

Circle of Reflections

For my mother

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Opening into the hard won hush  
Hollow and whole  
She has danced the dagger's edge  
And fallen, to fly.

from *The Undine Dream*  
in *Eclipse of the Scimitar*  
by John Kirnan

This is a book of poetry. Within its 106 pages, there are 59 poems, some short, some long. Though there are sections that divide the book into basic themes, if I tried to tell you what it's about, I would have to tell you 59 stories. Each poem is its own little world. Basically, the book is Life filtered through me. Whether the poems are any good or not is up to a reviewer or, more importantly, you. Personally, I like them. I write poetry for two reasons: I love writing, and I want to share what I experience in case it helps someone. Simple. I'll leave the complexity to the poetry and Life itself. Within our complex lives, you could say that each one of us in our own way is looking for the same simple thing. Peace. It can be quite elusive. The painter Edgar Degas said, "Art is not so much a matter of what you see but of what you can get others to see." May you *see* something in these pages that helps you in your search for the hard won hush.



**I**

**DAMSEFLY**

## Scorpio Passing

Must you  
Lace your love  
With poison  
Strike from above  
Like a slumming angel?  
An instant in your eyes  
Is one look too long.  
Your death dance  
Is just a walk-on  
A cameo disappearance  
That leaves me lifeless  
Stung.

## Retracing

Barefoot  
Footprints  
In the dust  
Track through time  
Stand before a mirror  
Paint patterns  
Of imagined memory  
On upstairs floorboards  
Of deserted farmhouse

In this moment of being  
There, alone, alive  
I am  
Creaked through wooden silence  
To join  
With wind torn curtain  
In the oneness of house

I see her then  
Stepping in from sun bright meadow  
Cautiously becoming  
Curiously out of place  
Where past meets present  
And shadow knows loss  
I feel her movement  
Through heartless rooms  
Till she stands before my silvered eye  
Her mirrored image  
Touched by remembrance  
Of future possibilities

Then I return  
Conscious of the dream  
But realizing  
The footprints end at the mirror  
Or somewhere beyond  
Reflected vision

## Balancing Act

“It’s only an ending I need”  
He would say angrily  
“I just want this to stop”  
Though there was never  
Any fear of falling  
From that fraying high-wire.  
Concentration did not allow  
Such simple dreams  
To disturb the thought  
Of one foot in front of the other  
Moving unendingly  
Toward solid ground  
Which might or might not exist.  
If eyes were downcast  
Scanning like cameras  
For any slight hazard  
And arms, machine-like  
Extended outward toward emptiness  
And always easily reached that goal  
It was all for  
Balance, balance, balance.  
It was just a way of trying  
To do more than nothing.  
So when the change occurred  
His mind was not prepared for it  
But his true feathered form  
Launched forward in straight and level flight  
Toward eyes that caught the spark  
Of some forgotten chance  
And held it just long enough  
For him to reach the edge  
Of what she in her quiet, gentle way  
Might call compassion or even love  
Until a small, lost voice was heard to say  
“It’s just a beginning I need.”

## **A Gift of Freedom**

Someday, my portrait  
May flow from your hand  
But I will never be able  
To write you into being.  
There are no words  
To make you seem real to me  
Only elusive inner visions  
That fill me with the power of life  
Only inadequate metaphors saying that  
Somewhere beyond  
This rush of broken moments  
There lies a hidden isle of peace  
Hawthorn ringed and green grass crowned  
A holy place of oneness  
Set in a time  
Of unmatched clarity  
Upon a sea of mystic dream and golden light  
A space where magic moves  
And love appears.  
Here, forever is possible  
If the price is paid  
And the price is always  
Freedom.  
I give you yours.  
You give me mine.  
It is as simple  
And as difficult  
As that.

## The Warmth of Cold Sparrows

November feathers ruffle  
In a coming winter wind.  
The warmth of cold sparrows  
Close to the source  
Is not always seen  
By the numbed and naked eye  
That misses much  
Dismissing such  
Trivial miracles  
As mere reality  
As if existence  
Were no more  
Than an obvious fact.  
But I will not let  
Magic slip past  
Will not let it fade  
For lack of wonder  
Or the want of  
Childlike sight.  
And much more, I see  
In this small, brown bird:  
Our lives, back then  
At the end of  
Wrong roads taken  
Perched on the precipice  
Of what was yet to come  
Hard futures keeping us  
From leaping into  
Untried, vibrant skies.  
But that's only  
Somewhat like  
This wee winged brother  
Window framed by grey light  
And the almost smell of cedar:  
Human fear and sadness  
Being, for the most part  
Complex and unnatural.  
And yet, like him  
We were  
Aware of earth and sky  
Weary, well travelled  
Surviving summer, expecting worse  
Searching for seeds of Spirit

(Continued)

Balancing on wires  
 Of wild weather freedom  
 Lost in the depths  
 Of cold sunlight  
 Leaving little trace  
 Of former movements through time  
 Though knowing full well  
 The privilege of footprints  
 And possible flight.

\*\*\*

But sometimes  
 In a life or two  
 There comes a time  
 When shadow becomes light.  
 A ghost that walks  
 Through ancient dreams  
 Wish-bright beautiful  
 Cloaked in history  
 Crowned by longing  
 Is willed to exist  
 By the sheer strength of need  
 Simple need.  
 For I needed you then  
 As I always will.  
 Always will need  
 The touch  
 Of compassion's hand  
 The look  
 Of green eyes glinting  
 Elfin wise as the woodland  
 Or soft as dark moss  
 Moonlight misted fur brown hair  
 Flowing rivers of light  
 Over sculptured line and curve  
 Each muscle slowed  
 To graceful, deer gentle movement.  
 Oh dear, gentle lover  
 Who with no sound  
 Speaks of what is Woman  
 Strong heart in fragile frame  
 Your power is great  
 That gives me this future:  
 A newborn at your breast

(Continued)

A cupped hand round a child's head.  
The touch of tiny fingers  
Waits within our gathered lives.  
With innocence and wisdom  
You believe  
That love is enough.

\*\*\*

The child will always love stories  
The kind her parents tell  
Of poets and painters  
Blind luck and love  
Of dreams you've lost  
Being found in the end.  
And when we walk through winter  
We three fine feathered friends  
Huddled close, hand in hand  
She will feel her feathers ruffled  
By the truth of sleeping trees  
By each hidden, holy stone  
That marks the endless miles  
Of each soul's chosen path.  
And though the winds of every storm  
May try to howl us down  
She will know  
I promise, by all that we are  
The warmth of cold sparrows  
Flying Home.



## Two Souls

Imprisoned by the curve of flesh  
The graceful line of bone  
The cowl of life's concealing cloak  
That blinds what sight has known  
The sacred candle flickers still  
In shadowed temple eyes  
And speaks to me of who you were  
Before you chose disguise

Held spellbound by the hallowed tales  
The holy gift of chance  
You chose to run this lonely race  
To dream this earthly dance  
To find, in loss of memory  
The way of truth and grace  
To cross, in lieu of landscape's lie  
Creation's inner space

You cradled reborn innocence  
A silent formless thing  
You sensed the quiet parable  
Then heard the deaf child sing  
And knowing freedom's price is just  
The wisdom of a slave  
You set your heart on paradise  
Your sail for wind and wave

So to this port, we both have come  
In parallel, a pair  
And though we've weathered separate storms  
This haven, we will share  
We'll pardon this duality  
Let live this lie today  
Till omens overpower love  
And ancient hearts give way

Perhaps, in other times, we'll meet  
Have met, are meeting now  
And though the teachings talk of one  
Two souls will learn somehow  
If you were lost in darker dreams  
I would not curse the night  
For I would know you anywhere  
In love, there lies the light

**Arcana** (for Jody)

In the space between phrases  
Where echo fades and silence deepens  
A gentling rhythm begins.  
Appearing to disappear  
From mortal sight  
She sways, in secret spiral  
To an inner music  
Played beyond sound  
She sings  
The ancient song of healing.  
In that second  
When hand catches spark  
And spark becomes flame  
The dark jewel blazes  
And I see  
A world within a world  
The arcana envisioned.

## **The Bridge Between**

The story still unfolds  
As I know it must and will.  
Dreams within dreams  
Must be travelled  
Seen through  
And discarded  
But sometimes  
When I see her  
Outlined against the sky  
Striding some forgotten ridge  
Toward a point beyond our reach  
There is something there that flashes  
On windswept, sunlit hair  
Something there that frees the eye  
From vision's blind belief.  
I can almost see  
Her feathered wings  
Lifting into flight  
See her spirit's power  
Electrify the air.

## **Damselfly**

Peering through the afterglow.  
Stretching raven-tangled, silken wings  
To fall and fold behind you.  
A crown of thorns, a halo  
A wisp of innocence lingering.

Peering past the rosehips  
Through the many mirrored panes  
To flight and flower.  
Leaving lust in love.  
Skimming other dark surfaces.

## Possession

She will not be yours  
Even in the smallest way  
Not be held  
To when and where  
Or even why

Questions  
Do not enter into it  
She simply is  
And you  
Either  
Accept that fact  
Or give in to anger

At times  
Freedom  
Seems a better way  
But then you remember  
A moment beyond magic  
A second beyond knowing  
And you are hers again

“People who live in glass houses  
shouldn’t throw stones.”

### **A Dream of Throwing Stones at the Sky**

Her  
Clear blue sky window  
Shatters, falls  
Sparkling the earth  
With broken colour.  
He watches as  
The black hole expands  
Leaks outward  
Infecting space  
With airless darkness  
Spreading night  
At the speed of light  
Till dream is nightmare  
And dreamer  
Wakes to sunrise  
And whispered hints of shadow.

## Two Ring Circus

Always the shadow  
Always the wife  
Like a bear on a bicycle  
Bound by the ring  
She performs this task  
To the best of her inability  
Circle by circle  
Day by day

Never truly seen  
But occasionally noticed  
By the wandering eye  
Of her posturing ringmaster  
She is work  
Sex  
Mother and mate  
But she is rarely love

Hating her husband  
For hating her mother  
Hating her mother  
For loving the chains  
Her dream fades fast  
Like shadow in sunlight  
And she is the shadow  
Always the wife

## Meeting

There is  
A slight reluctance  
A mute acceptance  
A wishing for  
More or less  
Than what is now  
Another putting on  
Of old disguises  
A discarding of solitude  
And its secret peace  
A gathering of emptiness  
For future use  
And the question of  
What to do with hope.  
It will end  
With one more quarrel  
A difference of opinion  
No different than the rest  
But until then  
There are only moments  
To be robbed of  
And many parts to play.



## **Pandora**

I owl away the darkened sky  
The moonless mind of night  
On rippling liquid trains of thought  
That flash through fields of light

Like Pandora  
You have left me  
With nothing  
But hope

I cross the desert's fire by day  
Resist the angered sun  
To shed the skin of blinding love  
Undo what you have done

Like Prometheus  
I must endure  
By strength of will  
Alone

## **The Portrait**

Merely  
A question of light and shadow  
Caught by the camera  
Your once fluid existence  
Now distilled  
To a fixed concentration  
You watch my every movement  
Wild eyes pacing  
The paper cell.  
Don't look to me  
For keys or answers  
We have both been hung.  
The difference is that  
(At the end of my rope)  
I, still living, twitch.

## A Winter Parable

At the orchard's centre  
On the grey gallows  
Of ice bound branch and sky  
One blood red apple hangs  
Missed and never missed  
Touched, but never kissed

It burns the eye  
A fire through frost  
A glowing desecration  
Of this cold purity  
That surrounds the hunter's heart

Knowing the distance  
The hand still reaches out  
Holds the hollowed air

Retreating footprints crystallize  
Track black boots  
To the orchard's outer wall  
Clear it easily

Too late  
The apple breaks free  
And falls

## Inside

In the light  
From a window  
A woman watches snow  
Fall and drift.  
When every trace  
Of his exit  
Is covered  
She draws the curtain.

## **II**

### **BLACK AND BLUE**

## The Chains of Liberation

She's a mother, a real mother  
 And I pity the son  
 Who had no choice  
 In the matter  
 And no way of seeing  
 The approaching storm  
 Of her Liberation  
 The loss of truth  
 Between lines of propaganda  
 The future donning  
 Of feminist fatigues  
 To fight for  
 Superiority and revenge  
 While somehow forgetting that  
 Equality  
 Had always been  
 The Cause

She's a sister, a real sister  
 To that new found  
 Perversion of power  
 That lets anything you say  
 Be used as evidence against you  
 That turns any defence  
 Against generalities  
 Into an imagined attack  
 On holy freedom  
 Into a confirmation  
 Of your guilt  
 The accused is  
 After all  
 One of them

(Continued)

She's a child, a real child  
Of delusion  
Who learned to blame men  
For any small deficiency  
She could not see  
In herself  
Who learned to hate them  
For the heavy handed  
Possibilities  
She knew they all carried  
Just beneath the surface  
Who learned to insulate herself  
Against their clever words  
And misleading dreams  
Just in case

She's a daughter, a real daughter  
Of the Goddess  
So she says  
And is at one  
With creation and peace  
Knows the why of things  
The reasons for  
Suffering and hate  
And yet  
Somewhere just beyond  
This daughter's present reach  
The Goddess  
Unseen  
Moves among these shadows  
And unheard  
Whispers  
"Love, always love"

## Stoned

A fifty year old  
Overweight woman  
Down and out  
Of luck and love  
Selects a few perfect stones  
And throws them through  
A stained glass window  
That she designed  
And created  
For her local church  
When she was twenty-five

The reason -  
“It doesn’t tell the truth anymore  
And I like to see thin things break”

The priest asks  
“What was it you shouted  
When you threw the first stone?”  
She softly answers  
“Translucence be damned  
I can’t see the light”

A fragment of Christ’s face  
Looks up from the street  
And smiles  
Understanding or guilt  
Depending on the sun’s light  
And where you stand



“...I will not let thee go  
except thou bless me.” (Gen. 32.26.)

## **Jacob's Angel**

Here, I stay.  
I will not  
Leave your life unanswered  
Or suspend my disbelief  
In blood and dust  
To play the player  
Who loves the part  
To dramatize the dream itself  
Beyond all recognition.  
I am yours  
But, at a price.

Forgive this unconscious ultimatum  
This defiant, pleading prayer  
For a gift once given  
Misplaced among pages  
Of mystical verse  
That could have rhymed  
A broken world into being.  
Were the key not lost  
I would not speak  
But what's within your rightful power to grant  
Is within my power to ask for.

And I do not ask for Things  
A wealth of pride and baggage  
To push toward the grave.  
I do not ask for wisdom  
Though I've seen the eyes  
Of compassionate men.  
I do not even ask for love  
Creation's fire or roads of peace  
Only freedom  
That I might regain my chance  
At precious life and flight beyond.

## **Talons**

Too long, the land lies fallow.  
Like a straw saviour  
Who finally sees the lack of light  
Like the last effigy of sorrow  
The scarecrow climbs down  
From his cross  
And simply walks away.  
Dice roll to darkness  
How well the black wings blend.

## **Apothecary**

Snow drifts  
Wind shifts  
Sun's light filters  
Through frosted glass  
Spotlights cobwebbed corner  
Where spider and fly  
Dance away the dangerous  
Moment before flight

Dried flowers rustle  
One softly clicks and falls  
To dust and tiny footprints  
Tracking an absence of dirt  
Through haunted rooms  
And shadowed hallways  
Where settling decades  
Drift down through ancient air  
Leaving scales  
Imperfectly balanced

“There is nothing to fear but fear itself.”  
- Franklin D. Roosevelt

## **Killing Fear**

Beyond the ravaged cover  
Within this book  
Of threadbare tales  
Lies your untold story  
A coffin's contents  
Undisturbed  
And yet, disturbing.

Scrawled across  
The shark-like lines  
Of past mistakes and headstones  
One surviving miracle  
Calls for freedom.  
With this power  
I can number your days.

Reaching through the earth  
To the dust of your memory  
Your body's voice held skyward  
In the palm of my hand  
I will let the wind  
Take your secrets  
Let the sun take your life.

## Black and Blue

Seven years ago  
Seven  
Earthbound  
Snail paced  
Head in heaven holy  
Foot dragging, dream eyed  
Dusty worn down bootheeled  
Years ago  
I thought I'd seen it all  
But the worst  
Was yet to come  
And come it did  
But didn't kill my spirit  
Though it tried to  
When the body wasn't enough  
Then tried to swallow  
What passed for a mind  
When the game of survival  
Took a half-time break  
But I'm still here  
Still kicking  
Still holding  
The jagged shards  
Of mirrored glass  
That took seven years  
To heal the shattered image  
Into something  
You might recognize  
But inside  
Where starlight sparkles  
Through threadbare night  
Worn thin by dreams  
That will not die  
On treacherous paths  
That ever unfold  
Toward a common destination  
That will exist  
Hammered iron glows  
Begins the plunge  
Through dark water's reflection  
To where black meets white  
And steel blue  
Is forever

## A Sparrow's Journey

I knew how to fly once  
 But it was very much  
 A waste of wings  
 And not true flight at that.  
 I thought I knew the wind.  
 The blue spirit's breath  
 Held no secrets for me  
 Or so I thought  
 Till lightning struck.  
 Still, this present state  
 Was always my choice.  
 Before my birth  
 I spoke to the sky  
 And this was his advice:  
 "Compassion for the grounded ones  
 Is a lesson well worth learning  
 Before you circle mountaintops  
 You first must walk the earth."  
 And he was right.  
 I've learned much  
 From dust and shattered bone  
 And if pain brings me  
 Closer to the truth  
 So be it  
 For soon I'll fly  
 As never before.  
 With each day  
 My strength grows  
 And wings as yet not healed  
 Still long for flight  
 As much as they ever did.  
 Then why this semblance of an answer  
 For a question never asked?  
 To attempt to force the future's hand  
 With talk of wings and sky?  
 No.  
 I could say  
 "If you only knew what you have..."  
 But each journey has its story  
 That never translates well  
 You've surely heard these words before  
 And might have even lived them.  
 Dropping the mask

(Continued)

I can only say that  
I see the man I was  
I see who I've become  
And I know what I know.

## A Long Walk Home

Strange  
How the feet  
Become accustomed  
To walking on broken glass  
Blood, the payment  
For the chant-like quality  
Of pain  
The constant push toward power

There are clouds  
Where even the promise of light recedes  
Paths through thunder  
Where no saviour's voice is heard  
But lightning flashes  
And the heart holds on  
Expands to imagine  
The homecoming

"We couldn't tell you"  
He smiles and says  
And His hand is on your shoulder  
His tears are in your eyes  
The circle ends, begins  
Grows smaller, closer  
Always closer  
To the centre



## **Sense of Balance**

On the high wire  
Where a continuous decision  
Is the only safety net  
A certain clarity exists:  
One misstep - the only question  
One more step - the only answer.

### **III**

#### **PRAYER FLAGS**

## Progression

It was

A serpentine suggestion  
 A labyrinthine land  
 A wicked whisper hiding  
 The open, waiting hand  
 An unsuspecting blindness  
 For black skullduggery  
 The slowly closing fingers  
 That innocence can't see  
 A pride that passed for wisdom  
 The cryptic law of need  
 Conceived and executed  
 From seed through flower to seed

It is

Received and yet, rejected  
 A form deprived of breath  
 A life that's lost in transit  
 A parody of death  
 A shattered comprehension  
 A consciousness concealed  
 A hopeful faith in love's word  
 A childlike trust revealed  
 The end of the beginning  
 A gift, a curse, a way  
 To realize the spirit  
 To climb the sun's last ray

It shall be

A flight beyond the falcon's  
 A clear, cool wind of light  
 A strength beyond the tiger's  
 A peerless sense of sight  
 A peace comprised of wonders  
 That issue from the heart  
 A oneness with the true source  
 A purity apart  
 A song in praise of power  
 Compassion, grace and chance  
 A silent genuflection  
 A wild and joyous dance

## The Other Child

Out of nowhere  
Outside my window  
One child says to another  
“You know the way home  
Why are you crying?”  
And for a split second  
I wonder  
If I’m the other child  
And why the voice  
Seems old and wise.  
But I’m not really crying.  
These glistening eyes  
Are only the result  
Of imagining  
What I know will be  
What I know exists  
In everyone’s future.  
If there is any sadness  
It is not for me  
Or for the length of the road  
But rather  
For those of us  
Who haven’t yet  
Sensed its presence.

## Snowflake Obsidian

Who is this winter child  
 Of spring love  
 This pure and perfect snowflake  
 Blindly falling earthward  
 To earthbound illusion  
 Blown by winds  
 Of past personas  
 To land here and now  
 A father's son  
 A son's father?

Who drifts down gently  
 A white light twinkle  
 On cold, dark nights?  
 The sky-black backdrop  
 Obsidian mirror  
 Cracks  
 To open  
 To show me who I was  
 To teach me who I might be  
 If I let my heart alone  
 If I let my fear die.

Once upon a lost hope  
 Long, long ago  
 I gave up  
 A woman appeared  
 I loved  
 The dream deepened  
 I trusted  
 A child approaches.  
 Is that not proof enough?

Oh lively, little wonder  
 Stretching your mother  
 Like a too small sweater  
 Kicking at the covers  
 Like the boy you will be  
 Tiny struggler  
 In creation's crawlspace  
 Heart beating for freedom  
 Like a racehorse at the gate  
 All our talk of angels

(Continued)

Must make you yearn for Home.  
You have given up the sky for us  
Its safety and its peace  
To blend your flight with ours  
To find what is not lost  
But we will keep the world at bay  
Prepare you for the path  
And our love and life's own magic  
Will give you back your wings.

## The Path

A breath of incense  
From the unseen temple  
Drifts down the path  
And draws me onward  
Toward truth  
And the end  
Of this particular beginning

Running water  
Trickling  
Through the evergreens  
Picks its own winding way  
Past my senses  
And on to other levels  
Lower and higher

As I approach  
A spiralled smoke  
From the dragon's mouth  
Surrounds this serpent tree  
With the purity of fire  
The power of surrender  
And I burn into being

The spell returned  
It falls to earth  
A sad and joyous memory  
Sparkling in the present  
Of what was and will be  
When path and peace  
Are sometimes one

But given the chance  
My choice is always  
To try and touch  
The outstretched wing  
When mirrored liquid  
Catches light  
In the dragon's blinded eye

## Prayer Flags

Bewitched by nature's siren call  
 I ran the legend's length  
 With word and song, I worked a spell  
 That steals the woodland's strength

Was led by crows to feathered thought  
 By deer to gentle grace  
 By branch to sculptured wisdom's growth  
 By roots to sense of place

I felt the seascape's timeless tide  
 Encircle and ensnare  
 Saw sparkling vision burn and pale  
 In sun shot desert glare

With every gull's cry, heard the tales  
 Of ships that sunk from sight  
 On every dune of moonlit sand  
 Saw caravans of light

I listened for the pause between  
 The music and the tear  
 I heard each sailor's landlocked voice  
 And knew I need not fear

I waited for the woman's eyes  
 But no seer ever came  
 To read the fate of heart lines lost  
 In dreams too wild to tame

A thousand trails cross thirty years  
 Each one of them gone cold  
 And yet, with this path's newborn breath  
 The shadow lives grow old

Like prayer flags on the winter wind  
 They tatter, tear and fly  
 Dissolve their realistic worlds  
 In pools of liquid sky

(Continued)



The arrow finds its mark at last  
The target ends its flight  
To bleed its life from blackened heart  
Till all that's left is light

A life that lives the journey's end  
Becomes a mystic's art  
The spell that leads to magic's source  
Awaits within your heart

## Suite: The Sisterhood

From small beginnings, the white flower grows  
 Becomes the bright one among many  
 And touched by a wave of the sea  
 Ends as light itself

1.  
 Blodwen

Brown berry eyes  
 Involved in mouse-like missions  
 The wild wee witch  
 Conjures innocence  
 From a tiny earthen vessel  
 Filled with precious mirth  
 And priceless mystery  
 Then pours heart and soul  
 Into the play at hand  
 Chocolate coloured, twig tangled hair  
 Impatiently brushed aside  
 Till green becomes grey  
 Till sundown snaps the wishbone dream  
 And she is dusty barefoot hopper  
 Springing homeward past fox and hounds  
 Or sylvan princess riding by  
 As white flowers whisper  
 Her other, secret name

(Continued)

2.  
Eleanor

Her auburn hair  
The captured art of flame  
While eyes convey the current  
Trace the flowing arc  
Of within and without  
The needs of expression  
That brand each barren canvas  
A brushstroked heartscape  
Of unrelenting reds  
And tempered steel-greys  
Her inner sun  
A driving desert pulse  
That refuses any memory  
Of windblown footprints  
Running down the hourglass dunes  
Fading into quicksand  
She is still electric youth  
The bright one, burning

(Continued)

3.

## Morwenna

A wave of the sea  
That strikes and then surrenders  
Immersed in thoughts  
Of what has come  
And what has gone  
She feels the tide-like rhythm  
Of alternating love and loss  
Touch the jagged shoreline  
Again and again  
Till rocks worn smooth accept their fate  
Offer no resistance  
Water down to oneness  
Then she can kiss the driftwood flute  
Caress the air's passage  
Through half-remembered storms  
To quiet coves of anchored time  
Where nets lie torn, forgotten  
And depth is only darkness

(Continued)

4.

Lena

Sun and snow connect  
 With something beyond  
 The lowland's reach  
 And the mountain speaks of power  
 In hushed and icy tones  
 Pierces the cloud of mortal thought  
 The veil of possibilities  
 This is the eternal reason  
 Why sky-blue eyes still reflect  
 A childlike vision of perfection  
 Why the thorny crown of age  
 Is worn with silent grace  
 A grace born of wisdom  
 And the truths of denial  
 Daughter of God, sister of light  
 Pray for the blind of heart  
 Who cannot sense the wind that forms  
 The eagle's holy spiral

**Blodwen** - "White Flower"

**Eleanor** - "The Bright One"

**Morwenna** - "A Wave of the Sea"

**Lena** - "Light"

## Earthbound Brother

Sleep  
 And dream of leafless arms  
 Reaching for Heaven  
 With beckoning hands  
 When winds bring Winter  
 And snow builds silence.  
 Hum the skeleton's tune  
 The song of lifeless bone  
 Frozen marrow  
 And remembrance.

Sleep till Spring's raw touch  
 Wakes wooden senses  
 To flying sky shadows  
 Thunderheads and drums  
 That beat green rhythms  
 Into barren soil  
 Rain dancing death into submission.

Draw in the Summer sun  
 Channel grounded power outward  
 To colour your cloak  
 With the wonder of growing.  
 Breathe the stilling heat haze  
 As it softens burning light  
 And turns bright truth  
 Into shimmering illusion.

Fall into  
 The cooling caress  
 That once again surrounds  
 Your dusty journey  
 Your sylvan spirit  
 As it roots among choices  
 Of solid grey  
 And rustling scarlet  
 As it patiently watches  
 With dark brown earthen eyes  
 That blindly see  
 And slowly close  
 To sleep  
 And dream of ice bound blood  
 That branches in  
 Toward tomorrow.

**I Will Remember** (for The White Eye Singers and Dancers)

The older dancer's feet  
Barely leave the ground  
She maintains the traditional  
Closer connection  
To earth's power

Young Fancy Dancers  
Look the part  
They turn and flow  
Like birds in flight  
Colour the air  
With female movement  
A blend of  
Innocence and grace

From the blue speckled wreck  
Of an old marching drum  
Past cowboy boots  
Coke cans  
Faded jeans and shirts  
Past cigarette smoke signals  
The magic moves  
Flows upward  
Past the drummers  
It changes the shape  
Of Sno-Jet baseball caps  
Till feathers shine  
Just beyond sight

(Continued)

Skybound voices  
Rise and fall  
Flash like lightning  
Sparked by thunder's drum  
They are instruments  
Of an ancestral rhythm  
The spell of incantation  
The blood of music  
That flows through  
Each spirit's form  
They create  
Then set free  
Beautiful shadows  
Offerings on the wind

The sky beckons  
Speaks to me of wings  
I soar the updraught  
Like an eagle  
Circling  
Higher and higher  
Toward the sun  
Toward the source  
While far below  
My other self  
Crosses the distance

In this moment  
I know their hearts  
Together  
We sing  
Past into present  
Dream into reality  
Red into white into red  
Sing of God  
Man  
A time of peace  
A time of sorrow

There is no finer art  
My brothers  
My sisters  
No finer gift  
Than what you've given me

I will remember



“Today, I will live well”  
- Navajo sunrise prayer

## **Breath on Glass**

Like breath on glass  
That fogs and clears  
The understated beauty  
Of such truth  
Becomes  
Apparent and invisible  
In the same instant

Today, I will live well  
Reject yesterday  
For the dream it was, is, will be  
I bow before tomorrow's perfection  
Its ever receding whisper  
That I am finally  
Beginning to hear

Trusting in the blade's accuracy  
I will slash the skin  
Of illusion's ritual  
To expose the spirit's light  
Then, as blood brother to the sun  
Like breath on glass  
I too will give way to clarity

## **Meditation**

The archer dreams  
Of life before the war  
Before the birth  
Before the choice  
Casting aside  
The armour of distance  
He bares his throat  
To the demon's blade  
And finds only  
Realization  
Of the honour lost  
In the false pursuit  
Of imagined enemies  
He becomes  
The ally of emptiness  
The true freedom fighter  
Awakening to peace  
Aimed at the sun  
He is the ascending arrow  
In endless flight

## **Novena**

Mind of the Father  
Understanding's twin-edged blade  
Reveals the lost light

Body of the Son  
Centre of blinding sorrow  
Hears the silent way

Soul of the Spirit  
Trinity's elusive koan  
Ends the mystery

## **The Greatest Story Never Told**

What's all this Xmas shit?  
It's Christmas  
And man or no  
For Christ's sake  
Give the man his due

At least  
He knew something  
About love and compassion  
Which is more  
Than can be said  
For the rest of us  
Who nailed him  
To a tree  
Simply because  
He ran against the grain  
Or because we somehow knew  
That his few and precious words  
Could be twisted to fit  
The pattern we had planned  
For future generations of believers  
For future seekers of pardon  
Oh, how well the king has served  
The many purposes of power

(Continued)

And if and when  
 The so-called  
 Second Coming comes  
 If John's strange dream  
 Becomes apocalyptic reality  
 Will we  
 In our finite wisdom  
 Try to postpone and trivialize  
 The inevitable  
 As we always do?  
 Will the silent caption  
 Slide across the serpent screen  
 Only momentarily interrupting  
 The latest soap's dirty vision  
 With  
 The End of the World - film at eleven?

Let us hope  
 That John was wrong  
 And that, unlike us  
 God will not indulge  
 In eternal abbreviation  
 Will not  
 Abbreviate the deviate  
 So to speak  
 By cutting sinners  
 From the heaven-bound herd  
 Of hornless people  
 Like the Cosmic Cowboy  
 They've made him out to be  
 Dispensing Western justice  
 With a, "Vengeance is mine"  
 That quick and lethal contradiction  
 Of his own pacifistic philosophy

(Continued)

It boils down to  
Basic questions  
Was he  
Who they said he was?  
Was he  
Just another dreamer  
With a beautiful, but flawed vision  
Of a universe gone wrong?  
Can he be  
What you're looking for?  
It's up to you  
It's up to me  
It's up to him  
To prove it

Snow falls on Christmas Eve  
Watch closely  
The wind whispers to the evergreen  
Listen well  
There are answers  
Beyond getting drunk  
Seven days later  
To forget what might have been

For me  
It's like this  
A creator creates  
A man keeps trying  
And what's been said  
Doesn't matter  
Truth will appear  
If the heart opens  
To the ever present  
Possibility

## Check-out Time

When check-out finally comes  
I'll be ready  
Actually, I'm ready now  
It's really only a matter of  
Exchanging one set of keys for another  
Slipping between a new set of walls  
That become progressively thinner  
With each move  
Until an accurate viewpoint  
Becomes apparent  
And you can  
Quietly live in peace

I'll leave behind  
One more old suit  
Of flesh coloured clothes  
Wrinkled, frayed  
And slightly out of date  
That's all  
Though maybe a memory or two  
Will linger  
Caught in the crack  
Of a squeaking floorboard  
So that someday, someone  
Might hear my presence and say  
"He walked here too"

No, I don't mind leaving  
This old hotel  
This dusty old dream house  
Of fading footprints  
It's just...  
I don't want to be  
The last to go  
To be stuck here wondering  
Why you've left me  
With no forwarding address  
Other than Home  
But then  
I suppose that's enough

## Magic Revisited

Sometimes, I tire  
Of this flat reality  
And wish I had  
A spare in the trunk  
But Pandora's box  
Has long since opened  
And even hope  
Has itchy feet

Just once  
I'd like to truly connect  
Say, "Let there be light"  
And see it flash  
Across a darkened sky  
But my lightning cloak  
With the magical pockets  
Is up at the cleaners  
And though I know  
The general area  
I've somehow forgotten  
The exact address

(Continued)



Still, there are other magics  
If you know where to look  
One surrounds a newborn  
Who's a little lost  
Having just got back  
From his holidays  
And being not quite ready  
For work  
One exists in the flight of birds  
A race I've long suspected  
Of being in an elevated state  
A higher life form  
Than those of us  
Who plough the earth  
Set the fire  
Pour the water  
And think we know the air  
Magic is everywhere  
In a million beautiful moments  
That sadly pass unnoticed  
But mostly, for me  
It's in the eye's crystal  
When I look deeply  
And see more than reflections

So maybe it's just  
That I'm tired  
And need a little more  
Of my element  
To keep the circle round  
And ready for the road  
It would be nice  
To hear the hallowed voice  
Of the Cosmic Referee  
Say, "OK, he's had enough  
Let him up"  
But the when of it all  
Only shadows the question why  
For I'll never give in  
Till I find what I'm after  
And even then  
Even then, the wheel will spin again

## **Metaphysical Meanderings** (A New Age Poem)

Security?

There is none  
It's an illusion

You are never  
Completely safe  
Never really beyond  
The attack  
Of your own attitude  
Unless you want to be  
Truly want to be  
To the point  
Of simply stopping  
What is not  
Really you  
And becoming  
Yourself  
Your true self  
And realizing  
There is no need  
To fear anything  
Since you are everything  
And why fear yourself?

It's your choice  
Anything  
Including safety  
Is always possible  
But not probable  
Given the restrictions  
Which, of course, don't exist  
Unless you want them to  
And you don't  
Or do you?

(Continued)

In the long run  
It's only your body  
That might not be safe  
Which is sometimes  
Hard to take  
Or wonderful  
Depending on how you feel  
Since all you have  
Or seem to have  
Depending on your version  
Of reality  
Is that body  
Which may or may not  
Be real  
In my mind  
Or the lack thereof  
(No self-deprecation intended)  
Since the mind  
May or may not be  
The brain  
And therefore  
Part of the body  
Which exists or doesn't

You see?

Maybe you don't  
But you will  
Eventually  
Take my word  
Which is Love  
Or better yet  
Find your own  
Because you'll need one  
If oneness  
Sometimes isn't clear

(Continued)

Actually  
It's all a big IF  
Even if it's your IF  
And if  
It turns out that  
All is illusion  
And Nothing is real  
Perhaps you are not even  
Reading this poem  
It may be reading you  
And perhaps  
Just perhaps  
Like you  
It is not  
Impressed

Where was I?

Oh yes  
Here  
Right here  
Right now  
Living  
Not for the moment  
But  
In it  
And  
Moving on

## **IV**

### **FOOL'S GOLD**

## **Fool's Gold**

Some say the poet is a fool  
To translate all his dreams.  
To give what no one wants to have  
Would make no sense, it seems.  
And yet for every hundred souls  
That pass his pages by  
There's one that sees the grain of truth  
That's hidden in the lie.  
For writing is a liar's game  
That's played for truth and light  
A way to touch the hardened heart  
And give the blind man sight.  
There's gold in them there hills of words  
Though fool's gold has no worth  
For those who will not question why  
They're here upon this earth.

## Being a Poet

Being a poet  
 Is like being  
 The only one  
 With headphones on  
 One of the few  
 Who hears  
 The music of the moment  
 Louder than a whisper  
 Tapping your foot  
 To inaudible rhythms  
 The occasional lyrical phrase  
 Escaping from your throat  
 To the amazement  
 Or dismay  
 Of other, less wired  
 Individuals

Being a poet  
 Is like being  
 A lightning rod  
 (If you're not careful)  
 Channelling  
 Wind, rain, and thunder  
 Is one thing  
 Lightning is another matter  
 You'd better be well grounded  
 My brave young friend  
 If you want to stand  
 That naked  
 Your temporary dwelling  
 Is a fragile thing  
 At best

(Continued)

Being a poet  
 Is like being  
 A child  
 Fresh from creation  
 And ready to learn  
 I've seen their faces  
 Beaming from strollers  
 Like headlights in the dark  
 Wonderful eyes  
 Filled with "Wow"  
 Simply amazed  
 By the current dream  
 Wanting to communicate  
 The beauty  
 And for the most part  
 Being unable  
 To convey the message  
 To anyone  
 But small dogs

Being a poet  
 Is like knowing  
 God's telephone number  
 Hearing it ring  
 At the other end  
 Saying  
 I'd like to speak to the Boss  
 And only always getting  
 His answering service  
 I'm sorry, He's not in, but...  
 But what?  
 But there is joy in the search  
 Joy in the struggle  
 And someday, perhaps  
 Joy in the finding  
 But  
 You must  
 Let it happen  
 You and truth  
 Were made for each other  
 Like pen and paper



**Hate** (The Writing Exercise)

I hate to write poetry  
No, that's not true  
I just can't be bothered  
Beating my head  
Against the literary wall  
Anymore

I'm just repeating myself  
Which isn't bad  
If someone's listening  
But they're not and won't

Or is that just an excuse  
For apathy?  
Who cares?

It's certainly not a block  
I've learned how  
Not to not write  
Just keep the pen moving  
Play carver later on  
Once you've grown a tree

Perhaps  
I just need a new subject  
Or an old subject  
Or a middle-aged subject  
Who feels old or young  
Or something other than  
What he truly is

I'd love to write  
About nature  
But at the moment  
It doesn't seem natural

(Continued)

I'd love to tell you  
About God  
But I've only heard rumours  
No first hand information  
No facts from the source  
So to speak  
Actually  
That's not true either  
(See any one of my other  
Repetitious poems)

I'd love to paint  
A love poem  
If I could find a good model  
Someone strong enough  
To stand up to the strain  
Of the artist's vision

Mostly I'd love to love  
Writing about hate  
But I can't  
So I wrote this  
Which isn't about anything  
Though it might be  
One day  
If I hate it enough  
To fix it

## Garage Sailing

Oh, to sail the Summer Saturday  
 Beyond alliteration's shore  
 To leave the muse behind  
 And cast off  
 In search of castaways

Amid the blur of bric-a-brac  
 One port of call  
 Still calls out  
 A house of fundamental difference  
 Where rejected relics were displayed  
 In a kind of five and dime religion store  
 Of weakened talismans and broken schemes  
 A garageable collection  
 Of faithful loss and gain  
 Where among the artifacts  
 One long playing historical record  
 Announced, "God went down to Georgia"  
 (But didn't bring a fiddle)  
 Sung by The Reverend Little Bob Whatever  
 In the business of healing  
 The dollar and the deaf  
 A flash of false polyester prophet  
 Preaching someone's word  
 (I don't know whose)  
 From beneath the standard toup  
 Amazing, what you find under an old rug  
 Never mind the nasty little songs  
 About and against the ecumenical movement  
 Mortician, heal thyself

(Continued)

To each his own  
I quietly said  
And thanked my version  
That they hadn't seen  
My Russian rowboat  
Parked a ways away  
Then, I noticed  
Their black lawn jockey  
Standing like some plantation elf  
With a yassir smile  
Carved into his face  
Hold your horses indeed

I wish I was a thief  
I'd make like Lincoln  
And set that sucker free  
Or replace him with a Rasta man  
Stoned in stone and six feet tall  
Offering joints  
With his outstretched hand  
Wearing a weed T-shirt  
Setting their lives to a Reggae beat  
As his heart pumps music  
From a well hidden band  
But, what's the use

Oh, to be a black man  
Rich and free  
With a big, white house  
And a big, green lawn  
And a little, white jockey

## Interviewing a Famous Poet

She says  
In your work  
Are we sometimes mistaking  
Person for persona?

And he answers  
Probably

How can we tell the difference?

It's not necessary

But we want the truth  
About who you are

The truth  
Has very little to do with  
What people want  
As for who I am  
I reveal more than most

Then tell me  
In this piece  
This woman you mention  
Who is she?

She is  
Lies and wishful thinking

You mean she doesn't exist?

I don't know  
I've never met her

But she seems so real

(Continued)

If she seems real  
It's because  
In seeking to convey the truth  
I'm willing to lie

I don't understand

That's because  
You're only interested in the facts

And how do they differ from the truth?

Real truth can't be proven  
It can only be experienced  
Now let me ask you a question  
Have you got the time?

Yes, it's three o'clock

That's not what I meant

## No Walls Treat

While listening  
To a lively poet's poem  
About a poet who had died  
Concentration caused my eyes  
To shift their focused blur  
And I saw  
Out through the sky blue window  
Beyond the walls  
Of The Wall's Treat Gallery  
Between city grit and Summer sun  
High in the air  
A little, lone, blue balloon  
Drifting on a wind of purpose  
Like a tiny, round ghost  
Determined to find home  
And I thought  
Where are you off to  
On such a fine day  
While this poem  
About your past life  
Echoes round this room?

## Sun and Moon

The setting sun  
Another flight, down in flames  
Tracers of light zero in  
Touch time  
Create need  
But forgo the bull's-eye  
There is magic  
Within loss  
For a life in terms of art

What looks like  
An effort to escape reality  
Is, in fact  
An effort to capture it

The waning moon  
Circling to halo  
The planet's path  
Touches darkness  
Creates shadow  
And the fear of movement  
There are angels  
Within reach  
Nothing more, nothing less



Bridgit - the Irish goddess of poetry.  
 The name means, "A Fiery Arrow."

## **Bridgit's Grove**

Beyond this crooked trail that climbs  
 The way lies straight and dark  
 Till shooting stars and comets paint  
 The sky with sacred light

There, the question and the answer  
 Turn each sorrow into wisdom  
 There, each ending is beginning  
 All is blindness, all is sight

And from the heights of Hawthorn Hill  
 Where Bridgit's Grove still waits  
 The goddess scans horizon lines  
 To find the faithful heart

Seeking graceful definition  
 Giving life to love's translation  
 Unifying all creation  
 Setting certain lives apart

In Bridgit's Grove, the poet dreams  
 Of magic, man and God  
 And in his dreams, the link is forged  
 The path unfolds, at last

Briefly burning, flaring brightly  
 As the sirens call him homeward  
 Born to follow, something binds him  
 Like Ulysses, to the mast

The winds of folly, fate, and chance  
 Breathe life upon his eyes  
 He sees the dusty sparrow's flight  
 And wingless, stranded man

Fiery arrows stretch the senses  
 On the Master's bow of longing  
 Touch the page and, springing skyward  
 Search the circle's flowing span

## Out of the Blue

Across a pure and solemn sky  
A gust of phantom birds  
Have carved their tunes in bright blue runes  
That touch this wand of words

This magic stick that writes and wrongs  
This hand-held bone that bleeds  
Upon the page, a winter's rage  
Or summer's tranquil needs

If inspiration points the way  
When time and truth collide  
Then rhyme comes through, out of the blue  
And rhythm's like the tide

The best of phrases fall from where  
I've never hung my hat  
The awkward line, I claim as mine  
And let it go at that

## **ADDENDUM**

## In Books

I have heard a gust of wind  
Teasing windless sails,  
Listened as the seabird called,  
Told his airy tales.  
I have heard a wizard's words  
Make a wish come true,  
Heard the roar of cannon fire,  
Swords and muskets too.

I have seen a feather fall  
From a birdless sky,  
Watched a lovely, lonely queen  
Lose her love and die.  
I have seen the little men  
Called The Fairy Folk,  
Joined them in a little dance,  
Shared a tiny joke.

I have smelled the baker's bread  
Rising warm and brown,  
Smelled the smells of market day  
Drifting through the town.  
As a fox, I sniffed at smoke,  
Caught the scent of man,  
Smelled the danger in the air,  
Then turned tail and ran.

I have tasted foreign fruits,  
Rain from jungle skies,  
Pirate's ale and witch's brew,  
Puddings, pastries, pies.  
I have eaten magic cake,  
Drunk from mountain streams,  
Tasted chocolate made with things  
Only found in dreams.

I have touched a baby's tears,  
Palmed a gambler's ace,  
Played a minstrel's silver strings,  
Slid right through third base.  
I have touched a wounded bird,  
Held him till he flew.  
I have touched the child in me,  
Hoping to touch you.

## Robin

Robin steals  
The last of day  
The glint of sun  
On woodland pools  
Shelters the prize  
Behind sundown feathers  
On the breast that protected  
Christ from fire

Nightingale sings  
Of quiet sorrow  
The loss of light  
The depth of night  
While blackened burrow creatures  
Cobwebbed in the dark  
Of waiting sounds  
And sleepy snuffling  
Dream the next day done  
The hard fight won  
The hunter gone  
And peace at hand

Till the Golden Dreamer  
Raises his arm  
Like a banner  
Of what must always be  
And safe in his dream  
Of constant change  
Says, "Dawn"  
Just to watch the robin wake

**There Are Wonders** (for Vera)

I do not know  
Your words  
Whether or not  
Your rhythm and rhyme  
Made the kindling catch  
Made the dead wood breathe  
Of the lost green dream  
Till the heartwood  
Growing wildfire  
Of past made present  
Burned away the blackness  
With a rumbling thunder  
Of magic, time, and mystery  
A certainty, a memory  
You had not lived  
But somehow knew.

I do not know  
If your free verse freed you  
To dance out from your eyes  
To whirl around the gravestone's laugh  
With carefree grace  
And care filled love  
Of life itself.

(Continued)

I do not know  
How easily  
Your phrases found the page.  
Did the effort  
Leave you tongue tied  
Blind as normal  
Out of touch  
With no apparent scent to trail  
Deaf to the moment's whisper?

I do not know these things.  
It doesn't matter.  
I know you  
Not the you of fact or fiction  
Though clues intrigue  
And tell their tales  
Not the you of face and form  
Though portraits of a passing life  
Open small windows and beckon.  
It is the you of me I know  
The common ground within  
The path we laid before us  
The choice made long ago.

(Continued)

A voice said  
 "Blood sister  
 Child of the moon.  
 There will be pain  
 Your spells can't heal.  
 There will be longing  
 For the other world.  
 And haunted by the need to see  
 You will grow tangled  
 Tattered, wild  
 But never old."  
 And you said  
 "Yes"  
 Always yes  
 Through all of the nights  
 And tumbledown days  
 That threatened to swallow  
 Your innocence whole  
 Yes to the sorrows  
 They deal from that deck  
 For the sensitive feel  
 The darkness too.  
 Open to white  
 Is open to black  
 But wonders await.  
 And there are wonders  
 My sister  
 You knew that  
 As all word witches do  
 Miraculous flashes  
 Of insight and joy  
 Diamonds to drip  
 From your ink-filled wand.  
 When puzzles appeared  
 You had to pursue  
 And when your  
 Passionate, compassionate  
 Translation was done  
 You knew why you wept  
 You knew who you were.

(Continued)



To see a tree  
And know the truth  
To write the sky  
And be there  
To capture for others  
The heart of God  
In a child's trusting eyes  
These are why  
You wrote  
Those loving words.  
These are why  
This power  
Is given.

## What Hasn't Been Heard

One woman on a train  
Is telling another  
Of how she lost her man  
To the war  
Of their few months of marriage  
Before he shipped out  
Of their plans for a business  
A family, a life.  
When the story's over  
She cries.  
And the listeners  
All around  
Don't quite know  
What to do with  
This remembrance of love  
Lost so long ago  
This unguarded emotion's  
Surprising escape.  
The train rushes on  
Blows her history away  
Like leaves by the track  
Like cars at a crossing  
Seen once and forgotten.  
Each passenger's future  
Waits at the station  
But if past could be present  
What would they see?

(Continued)

"I love you, Vera"  
 He says to himself  
 Behind the locked door  
 Of their wedding night room  
 "You've given me back  
 All the dreams that had died  
 You've given me magic and beauty and..."  
 And maybe he'll chance it  
 Maybe try it out loud  
 Try to say what she's known  
 From the very first day.  
 And then she comes in  
 And he can't even breathe  
 And the world's gone all gentle  
 And quiet and clear  
 And the words have all vanished  
 Back into his heart.  
 All thought is reduced  
 To a feeling of light  
 That surrounds and enfolds  
 As it flows from her eyes  
 Till he touches her cheek  
 And he's filled with  
 Her love.  
 And a halo is forming around them tonight  
 That night  
 And so very few others  
 Till he left her  
 To fight for her freedom  
 And in dying  
 Took it away.

One woman on a train  
 Has been telling another  
 Of how she lost her man  
 To the war  
 And the passengers  
 Deaf to what hasn't been heard  
 Let the miracle  
 Slip away.  
 "I'll be back for you, Vera"  
 He said when he left  
 And one listener  
 Believes that he will.

## Little Vera

“If I was a stamp,” little Vera said  
“I’d look for a letter marked Heaven”

“If I was a book,” little Vera said  
“My pictures would always be doorways”

“If I was a pen,” little Vera said  
“I’d want to belong to a poet”

## Messengers

The differences  
between us  
are many  
and they mean  
nothing

Don't believe  
what others say  
I'm not your enemy

There is a child  
sleeping  
He is  
impossibly yours  
He is  
perfection  
Where words end  
he begins

Your voice  
singing love  
pure love with every note  
singing your world  
in your tongue  
to your son  
tonight  
that voice is mine

Your hand  
that reaches  
to express the depth  
to needlessly, needfully  
smooth hair into place  
to touch with respect  
the grace of small fingers  
that hand is mine

(Continued)

Your eyes  
that now discover  
what everything means  
the path of family  
on a spiral of years  
your eyes  
that catch magic  
alive and unhurt  
then blur  
and, for a moment  
see so much more  
those eyes are mine

Your heart is my heart  
your strength is my strength  
your father, my father  
your son, my son  
We must listen  
to the truth  
these sleeping children speak  
these peaceful little messengers  
these tiny dreamers  
in our  
darkness

Don't believe  
what others say  
I'm not your enemy

The differences  
between us  
are many

And they mean  
nothing

**Gratitude** (for Marian)

Seven green leaves fell  
The day the angel spoke.  
Though I recall no words  
The images she held  
Spiralled up into my eyes.  
No brush, but a wand at work here  
My lips mouthed Wow.  
My childlike mind  
In its strangely complex way  
Told my spirit  
That my heart  
Was simply delighted.

Seven feathers floated down  
Through those few romantic years.  
Collecting crow dreams  
That, in time  
Watched us fly away  
We didn't know  
As no one knows  
That certain forms of beauty  
Cannot glide forever.  
But I heard the angel sing  
And was held within her wings  
And rhymed a song or two  
Between moments  
Of blind, wide-eyed love  
And truly seeing oneness.  
For as the emerald eyes  
Turned toward the light  
As the body's shadow map  
Caught the candle's flicker  
A facet of the Goddess jewel  
Told the long awaited story  
Of the shorter road home.

(Continued)

Seven whispers on the wind  
Breathed family and forever  
As daughter became the Mother  
And mother became the child.  
So warm within that waiting  
That gathered us together  
So deep within our growing  
The greatest of adventures  
That the world seemed to cradle all three  
And postpone all the anythings  
Other than Magic  
Till we lived out  
In peace  
Our dearest of dreams.  
I saw the angel  
Give birth to our son.  
I saw them together  
In uncommon moments  
Where love makes a space for what matters.  
And I cannot truly reach  
The feelings I had  
With bridges of words  
Or rippling strings.  
Wonder has its own lovely language of tears  
And it wells up from within  
The place where we're God  
Till we let go of needing  
To speak or explain.

(Continued)



Seven stormclouds gathered  
For the darkness long in coming  
And the spectre lay in wait  
Till its ambush of obsession  
Timed to cause the most destruction  
Stole the sparrows' sun sparked wings  
Stole the river's curve and flow  
Stole the life tree's centred sway.  
And through it all  
The angel tried  
Till trying lost its way.  
So we settled into something  
When the danger finally passed  
A kind of odd repeating rhythm  
Of old hurts and new hope.  
Both faded.  
And through it all  
The angel waited  
Practised patience and compassion  
Showed her love at every turn  
Said, "Though I cannot be your sky  
I will not let you fall"  
And I have learned how powerful  
A different love can be.

(Continued)

Seven spells of evolution  
 Swirl outside my battered door  
 Battered on the inside  
 From attempts at escape.  
 But the Light shines through the cracks.  
 Soon, I'll feel  
 The barrier break  
 Falling into fragments  
 Then dust underfoot  
 Then footprints fading.  
 I'll welcome the rush and return  
 I'll welcome the end of an old reality  
 I'll welcome the wizard I've always been.  
 And through it all, again  
 The angel, my listener  
 My encouraging crutch  
 Who never once laughed  
 At all my new beginnings  
 At all my crazy flights and falls  
 At all the schemes that others  
 Behind their unconscious constructions  
 Carelessly call fantasy  
 And the ravings of fools  
 My angel will smile  
 Since she always knew  
 That the path and I  
 Would eventually find  
 Each other.

Seven words phrase the questions.  
 Is there a hidden crossroads  
 Up ahead?  
 Will Spirit abandon memory  
 By the roadside?  
 Will our luminous bodies  
 Flow into one?  
 Perhaps not.

(Continued)

Seven notes sing  
All possible tunes.  
The traditional has never been our way.  
Though we may not be lovers  
We love just the same.  
We are determined to be free  
But not of each other.  
Wherever I go  
I know you'll be there.  
By your side  
I have learned  
What might have been missed.  
With your help  
I have found  
What was so long hidden.  
Gratitude seems like such a little word  
Like a small flying thing  
Set free from my hands  
But I know no better metaphor  
That means as much to me  
Than a sparrow taking flight  
Leaving earthbound life behind.  
Thank you lover, friend, and angel  
For the example of your wings.

**There's a Light** (for Mum)

There's a light  
That shines down through  
The last fifty years  
Fifty years, more or less, of progress  
Toward a different light  
The same light really  
For there is only one thing  
That we are.

This light is sometimes night light  
Child's room breathing peace  
Soft cheeked, baby dream eyed  
Small, so small, delicate face shapes light  
Tiny hand  
Perfect clue to perfection  
In this moment and always light  
Breath taking, heart swelling  
No thought, no word light  
But that is past of past.

(Continued)

Now I speak of the then present  
 When girl, girl, boy are older  
 When light catches crystal movement  
 Over moonlit sculpted  
 Snowdrift crest  
 Of white wave  
 Of frozen white sea  
 Surrounding island of house.  
 Light within light  
 Creating something there to notice or not.  
 But see the boy in the frost framed window  
 He misses nothing of the magical stuff.  
 Nothing offered by normal's shadow  
 Ever slips past eyes eager to see, see  
 See beyond, to what he knows is there.  
 He feels he will never give up  
 And, as it turns out, he never does.  
 To him, on this night  
 The light reveals other moons  
 Crescent snow moons  
 Drifted and drifting  
 Into car wheels waiting  
 Softening steel  
 Silencing, soon to crunch snow, hard black rubber  
 Rubber tires like rubber boots  
 Black on white tread paw prints  
 Seeming to go somewhere  
 But never moving.  
 These tire moons, perhaps more beautiful  
 In their temporary state  
 Than the tired by Time one  
 Forever circling Forever  
 Speak to the boy.  
 He listens and plans words  
 Translations for others  
 Who might not speak snow.  
 And the light touches iced branches  
 A creaking sway of sleeping life  
 A presence  
 Dreaming it lives  
 While woodsmoke searches  
 The world beyond the chimney  
 Understands dissipation quickly  
 Becomes one with the sky.

(Continued)

The boy sees  
 Wonders about wonders  
 For a while  
 Then leaves the warm cold view  
 For the warmth of light inside  
 Inside the Christmas Eve house  
 Inside his Christmas Eve self.  
 There is nothing he must do  
 But much there is to dream of  
 Before the long awaited morning  
 Awakens him to play  
 With cowboys and indians  
 Constructed western towns  
 Impregnable plastic forts  
 And fun deaths everywhere  
 Just like in the movies.  
 He loves the stories.  
 Adventurous illusion calls to him.  
 He doesn't know  
 He's already there.

The boy sees  
 The two teenage girls  
 Who are busy not doing dishes in the kitchen.  
 They dance to music that sometimes isn't there.  
 They dance with each other.  
 They dance with dishtowel arms  
 Offered by romantic cupboards.  
 They are always listening  
 To singers and songs.  
 The singers affect them in strange ways.  
 They are involved  
 With odd clothing rituals  
 Pennies in their shoes  
 Worn backward sweaters  
 Sugar coated crinolines attracting bees.  
 And, for them, Christmas presents  
 Have nothing to do with wars of any kind.  
 They are mysterious.  
 They are older sisters.

(Continued)

The boy sees  
That his father isn't there  
But knows that he's working  
Night shifting paper  
Forming form piles  
Signing, stamping, smoking  
Leaning from his customs cabane  
To ask passers-by  
"Have you anything to declare?"  
No one ever says  
"Yes, it's very cold"  
But it is.  
He sleeps through present time  
Oblivious to crackling paper  
Content in provider dreams  
Where every child has enough.  
A stray thank you  
Drifts under the door  
Enters his ear  
But he doesn't claim it.  
It's the happiness  
In the tone of voice  
That makes him smile.

(Continued)

And the woman, the mother  
The organizer supreme  
Makes it all happen.  
The money touches her hand  
And Christmas Magic appears.  
Every dollar bill stretched  
To ten times its size  
Every gift wish catalogued  
Received and wrapped  
Every decoration dispatched  
To its traditional place  
Every bite of food exactly  
The same as last year  
Which is to say as perfect  
As memory would ask of it.  
Those slightly late dinners  
And the many sandwiches to come  
Were the best, period, no contest, bar none.  
Sorry sisters, sorry aunts  
Sorry cousins, and wife  
Sorry angelic grannies  
Looking down with a frown  
No cook can compare  
At that time of year  
At that space in Time  
In that precious place.

(Continued)



The boy sees  
His mother  
She is everywhere at once.  
She *is* the Home  
The centre  
The hub of the family wheel.  
All spokes radiate from, and return to, her  
As life circles round her faith  
And journeys down the road.  
He loves her so much that  
It is the one thing  
He will never find with words.

There's a light  
That shines down through  
The last fifty years.  
It illuminates that younger dream  
That frozen, always place.  
We should not have longing  
For what once was.  
We are still what we were.  
That can never change.  
Four hearts still shelter  
Their connection  
Four hearts still connect to a fifth  
Who, somewhere  
As night deepens and magic expands  
Dreams the Christmas morning house  
Back into being.  
And the happiness he hears  
In our voices, then and now  
Still brings contentment  
Still makes him smile.

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