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## Introduction

Really, she didn't leave, or maybe she did, but you are the one who let the dream die. That dream may not have been true for you, but you are the one that let it go, and then said "she did it"...

You know? We write the truth, and the future, but we need to be able to face the truth, and really, there is joy in it, and a great deal of freedom.

Now, my muse, she knows a lot. Above all else, she knows this. She knows that I need to tell the truth, and be responsible for my own past. And she knows to tell me that with her love, and accept no less. She knows she has the same responsibilities in her own life, as ethereal as that life may be.

We need to earn we. Me and my muse. She might get mad, but she don't get gone. Same with me. We continue, day by day, moment by moment to earn we.

My muse and me. What a tremendous joy. Freedom from "hip hooks", if even as an instrumental passage. Freedom from genres. Freedom to do what we were born to do. Write the truth. How do you actually feel about that? Can you play it? Where is the joy in that? Can you play it? What about this kaleidoscope called life makes you laugh, makes you cry?

Can you play it?

My great joy is my muse. She expects, will accept no less, loves, laughs, and appreciates that I can play it. And will accept no less.

She is not the room full of strangers that most of us write our songs about, and play them for. She dances, and cries, in the life I write and laugh and sometimes cry about.

She loves the truth.

Walter Mosley, in a book titled "R.L.'s Dreams" wrote: "...and when he died, he would do it making music from life, like real men did, a long time ago..."

Now, we live in a world of sad songs, but the fact of the matter is that we write the songs, we play the music.

Sad would be only one way to look at things.

## PREFACE

Dawn's breeze prowled and stalked the tall grass.

The sun just beginning its daily stroll across the sky.

Across the field, trees still dark, the night's dreams were finding their way to the nests, lairs, holes in the ground, or the trees, or the clouds they called home.

He sat quietly, watching them scurry or skip, or walk boldly, on their way home. He wondered what dreams told their children as they tucked them in.

He wondered if dreams looked in the mirror and saw their fathers sometimes. He knew their father had looked in the mirror and seen them, sometimes. He wondered if dreams, like people, knew that if you decided, and were diligent and dedicated with it, what was their world, and what was our world could merge, and that was the future. He wondered if they taught their children that. He wondered if their children listened. He knew their children would learn that on their own anyway. Did they, like him, simply try to make it easier for them?

And the circles and the thoughts and the plans for lifetimes turned and folded like individual kaleidoscopes, differing only in details. While the scope, the hopes, remained like days passing, each one a little forward from the last.

## ABOUT BEGINNINGS

What is it about people in your life; your grandmother, my grandfather? (When I was about six I was cutting the lawn, and did a horrible job, my Grandfather was watching, he said: “Tom, is that a good job?” I said “no”, he said: “if a job was worth doing at all, it was worth doing well”. I cut that lawn five times before we both agreed. I never forgot it.). Then there was Katie Cole! Who was Katie Cole? Isn't that a question!

Katie Cole was a friend of my sister's. She was beautiful, sparky and would get in your face at the drop of a hat. She was a year older than me. All the way through high school I was very shy and secretly drooling.

In college, I was going to be a history teacher. I knew I needed to be planning something and that was the closest thing to interesting for me. I had a professor who would teach periods of history by reading from the journals of the people involved. It made it come alive. I got into jazz and started to sneak out of the house and go to the city to a small club on Divisadero called “The Both And”. I would hang in the alley and listen. The people in the club knew I was going to get killed out there so they started letting me in. I would sit in the loft with my hardly shaving white face looking over the railing. I saw Miles Davis and his historical quintet stopping time with his intensity. Philly Joe Jones would at times be playing different times on both sides of the cymbals. Jon Hendricks without Ross and Lambert amazed me. I saw legends on a 10x20 foot stage in a room not 30x50. The life those people could put into it! I hung out enough so that I knew Dizzy Gillespie's bass player Chris White and he knew me. Gillespie, now that guy would play. The amazing intensity it takes to get a quiet thing across is something I am still learning. The precise, exact, calm, slash, of a quiet thought with no reservation. And not twice.

Well, as you'll recall, and Dylan sang: times were changing. I ran into Katie. She'd get me to take her to the city, and drop her off at the Longshoremen's Hall or some place, and I would go listen to jazz.

But Katie being Katie, it wasn't long before we were going to the Fillmore, and then Winterland. I would watch her putting lights in her shoe, and laughing as only she could do.

Viet Nam was the period. I knew I was watching history as it was happening, decisions and directions needed to be chosen.

I realized that the western expansion of the continental United States was a political strategy necessary for the security of the nation. But it was done by marketing the west to families with nothing. Dreams of freedom and becoming landed gentry were sold to factory workers, on ground with no infrastructure. For that to happen the buffalo had to go, and the Indians, where young men, my age, to have a dance with Katie, had to count coup, and steal horses. Viet Nam was clearly just another "political strategy".

However, counting coup and stealing horses was done on the plains of your own integrity.

I had no idea what I had to do to have a real "date" with Katie. I was her ride, she had her boyfriends, and I was jealous. The buffalo were gone, and that culture destroyed, as was inevitable, but with a viciousness that made "the white man's burden" a "worthy" dream. We were in Viet Nam, and I had to decide. Ken Kesey lived in town, and Joan Baez. Dylan played a coffee house, and wrote about "where rivers freeze and summer ends", which didn't happen in California. John Hammond Jr., Robert Johnson, Gary Davis, Sleepy John Estes, all sang with a kind of emotion that was amazing. How could they wait until tomorrow to play a note, and then it was exactly right?

Well, while all this was going on, I had a couple of friends who were taking guitar lessons from the TV. One night I picked up a guitar and made a couple of notes myself. Those two notes, the way they related to one another; and that you could play them, those same two notes, with different attacks, or different times between them, and they would feel different, made more sense to me than anything I ever had known. There was a kind of reality about those two notes I never knew could exist.

Katie had me listen to Sandy Bull, a New York guitar player, as well as John

Fahey, who had just come out with what was the first independent hit record. Bert Jansch was an English guitar player, who later was with a group called Pentangle. He would run his guitar rhythms against his vocal like storm waves, icy grey-green waves, against a breakwater on an overcast day. Branches exploding at 60 below zero. His honesty and humanity was staggering. These people made sounds similar to what I was hearing in my head!

The amount of motion Joan Baez or Dylan would make with their guitars! I was amazed. Dave Von Ronk could play like his fingers were feathers, and his voice a fog horn.

Leadbelly had been in prison, and the Governor of Texas visited, Leadbelly sang “if I was the Governor, and the Governor was me, I’d write him a pardon, and let him go free”, and the Governor did. There was Erik Satie. And Bitches Brew

Life churned.

Life wasn’t about a job or what was in a book. Nor was history about what was in somebody’s journals, as human as that might have made it seem.

Life was in the fields of the south; or blew across Utah where you could stand and feel like you were on a basketball floating through space; or in Boston, or New Orleans. Life was with kids making the same confrontive kinds of decisions I was; it was with coal miners who had to get drunk to crawl down a hole in the same ground they had seen fall on their brothers and fathers, knowing that if the mine ceiling didn’t kill them the black lung would. Life was with the old cowboys, on the street with their grandsons in Jackson Wyoming, broke, waiting out the snowstorm which kept their jobs from starting; or the sailors on the California coast.

Friends were getting married, having children and the wonderful looks in their eyes warmed my heart while their wives did not much want me and my wandering ways around.

There was some kind of rhythm to it all. Not very symmetrical, but you could hear it. I wandered looking, listening and trying to play it. Sitting on a curb in Boston crying because I had just “sold” the music for some food, to people I couldn’t get to hear what I was trying to play about. I felt like a whore. Then learning the magic, those points far, far apart, but absolute, as I began to be able to get them to hear what I had seen.

Katie Cole had opened that door. It is a universe I, in some senses, still live in. I never did really thank her.

Time passes. The moon and the earth and the sun all move. This small forgotten galaxy changes in its relationship with the rest of the vastness of what is the physical universe. People change too. One moment is, and then it is not.

About four years after those early San Francisco days I ran into her. I had a Jaguar and we drove to the beach. We made love all that night; it was the real thing: a dance on the beach in the moonlight. Forty years later, I still smile thinking about it.

When I dropped her off at dawn, we looked at each other and it was like seeing that a heartbeat or two too many had passed. There was a gulf, and somehow something had changed and we didn’t know what it was. She said “I feel like a hot house flower in your world; I don’t think I could survive”.

What was odd was that it was her world I was living in; or at least the one she had shown me. I went by a couple of times, but we couldn’t find anything to talk about. I ran into her in a supermarket after another three or four years, she had gained a bit of weight and married a professor from Stanford. I think now she is a grand mother, I hope she and her husband love each other well.

## Sally

Sally was precocious as six year old girls go, and curious. She loved to watch the sunrise, and was particularly pleased that the window in her room faced the dawn.

This particular morning she stretched her feet out under the comforter liking the feeling of the clean sheets on her toes, and pulled the warm cover up to her chin and listened. She could hear the ducks in the pond and a woodpecker. She could hear a rabbit rustling and squirrels playing in the yard. She could even hear the tulips pushing their way up through the nearly frozen ground, reaching for the sun that seemed to be bringing life to everything it touched.

Sally did love the dawn! She could listen for a while and think about what adventures the day the day might have in store for her.

Today for example, she could start the garden, see where the tomatoes would go, and the corn. It was important to get it so they had enough space. And she could go talk with Henrietta and Abigail, crusty old Jasper, the ducks, and brush the horses' tails until they flowed like sunlight. She could read stories and she could write some letters. She had wanted to write her Aunt to thank her for her birthday doll, and her friend Christi, just because she liked to write her, and the Boogie Man, who she had been getting to know. He was funny. It turned out that his name was Boogie from the way he danced. It was short for Boogie Woogie. The letters he wrote were fun, they didn't make much sense, or have much to do with anything, but they were fun. And his feelings got dented if she didn't write him something. Sometimes she would just write "phttt", and that was it. It was a game and she was a busy girl! Being precocious had its responsibilities and she liked them.

Well, enough of that! She *was* a busy girl, and with the day all planned, it was time to get on with it!

Jasper and Boogie were sitting on the hill beyond the pond enjoying the spring night. It was finally spring! Cool, starlit, with the promise of summer's heat; the moon was full, with high clouds drifting across it. There was the restlessness of spring mixed with the smell of fresh turned soil on the breeze.

“What do you think?” Jasper asked.

“What? Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't listening”, replied Boogie.

“I was saying that Henrietta and Abigail think it is time to head north, but I kind of feel like hanging around here this summer. Why is it every fall we come south, and every spring we go north? I like it here. Why not just stay?”

“I know what you mean. That is what I was just thinking about myself. Well not about you flying north, but about doing the expected. Like, I'm the 'Boogie Man', but I just kind of fell into wandering around children's dreams. It seems like when it started, I could just tip toe into their dreams with a 5/4 this, or a 13/8 that, and it was cool. They'd be sleeping and then they'd be laughing in their sleep.

“Things started changing, and 5/4 stopped being so cool, like it didn't fit, and they would fuss. These days, what with all is on the television about what is cool, video games and the lies they are taught in school, the drugs from the schools and their friends, with their attitudes, it's kind of feedback loop, some chunk chunk mechanical kind thing they call entertainment, and that scares ME. And they call me a bad dream! What happened to fun? I don't even want to go there anymore! I never wanted to scare anybody, I loved it when they laughed, like a horn section would blow!!!

“So, now I'm the Boogie Man, just because, like you, I flew north every spring and south every fall, and no, it just isn't cool anymore!”

“Wow man, that's deep”, said Jasper, “but I do know what you're saying. It's something! What do you think will happen if we change it, hum... how do you think we could we change it?”

## Finding Home

We slipped out of Algeron, out from behind that small moon. Just a heart beat away from deep trouble. The kind of trouble you really didn't want to have to figure a way out of, the kind that would cost you lifetimes of confusion.

There had been a moment of hesitation before the star drive kicked in; and another moment of wondering if the repairs and updates on the cloaking would stand up to the probes' tentacles reaching, searching, trying to snare a just a hint of a trace of us.

And then we were gone!

We both sighed with deep relief, and I glanced over at her. Damn she was beautiful. In a fight: fearless and unrelenting. Fierce like a tiger fighting for her own! There was nobody better at your back. And did she have my heart! To be that lucky was such an amazing blessing.

She was so intent on what she was doing, with that little furrow between her eyes, and tight, slight downturn the corners of her mouth got; I don't think she realized my sigh was both of relief, and at how amazingly lucky I was to have found her. Damn she was beautiful!

There had been those moments of hesitation, and wonder, and then gone. Now, gone to where?

Isn't it funny?: life? You think your thoughts and look at life and the way life looked was different than the way your thoughts said it should be. Then you did something to make it more like you thought it should be, and all hell would break loose!

The next thing you know you're smuggling rum onto the coast of Ireland with a small sloop on a foggy night, dodging the English frigates, and having some great tavern fights with the red coated custom agents, or firing up some lost small planet to form a government of its own. The changes one could go through. It was all good, and could be a lot of fun.

You would dance from lifetime to lifetime, through time and space, adventure, and

project, each seemingly unrelated, but all with a common purpose. And through all of these, some of the people you shared it all with were the same.

She had been there for a long time, and their adventures had been seemingly infinite in variety.

That time could fold upon itself and form textures. That the adventures which were like they had a life of their own, were actually the effect of your own decisions. They were creations to achieve goals of your own making. This was a fact and facet of it all that seemed to be lost on most of the people and places they had encountered. There was true freedom in this fact of existence.

What they were really trying to do was to remind people of their own natures.

Damn she was beautiful! Where to now to continue this dance they did so well?

The other thing that was funny was what people thought of them. Some people called them gods, and some called them demons. Some tried to deify, and some to crucify, some seemed totally unaware of their existence. Some even denied they existed at all, and some even worked to convince others that they didn't exist at all. What was the really funny part is that all of these beings were just like them, but had simply forgotten, and mostly were pretending they never knew!

Slipping in and out of time and space demanded that you were free from it, or weren't attached to it. But sometimes things happened that you didn't really intend, sometimes you slipped. Sometimes people got hurt. You got slower.

Sometimes at the end of a particularly glorious battle, up close and just between your scimitar, and the other guy's,

Absolutely Glorious!

At the end, when you were still standing, you had looked down into the eyes of a small child. And through those eyes you saw you had destroyed a world.

You didn't mean for that to happen, and you couldn't forget those eyes

And you got "careful" of "wishing you hadn't".

And you got slower, and slower, and finally caught.

There was a jerk and wrench as the beam latched onto their ship and a spinning sensation that increased in velocity, like a ball on the end of a rope winding on to the pole, and then a flash of blinding light, and then, for what seemed like infinity, nothing.

Just before that last blinding flash, he looked over at her and had two thoughts: the first was how the question about the cloaking upgrades seemed to be answered (in the negative) and the second was that they would find each other. He saw the same in her eyes. Weren't those a pair of eyes!

-2-

He liked walking by rivers in the springtime. He had for as long as he remembered. He liked the smells, and the flowers, even the mud, and the almost cold, and the future.

It didn't matter if it was the Euphrates, or the Mississippi, the Rio Grande up by Taos, the understated stream overstated as the Tularosa River, the Humboldt, the Nile, the Thames, the Cumberland or the Buffalo, he loved walking by the water. There were pictures that would float through his mind, which he couldn't connect with anything he remembered actually seeing, feelings he couldn't remember actually feeling, and it was very free. It was a bit like he was reminded that he had forgotten something, like an itch he couldn't quite locate, but he wanted to scratch it. He remembered flashing focused eyes, a tight frown, a sense of warmth and connection, and he knew that was true too!

It was freedom, not like choosing a movie, or having the time to go to the store, but freedom! To exist, to really be able to choose, like to really create! To cause to exist!!! And he knew it was true.

In the spring he wanted to know where it had been true. In the spring he wanted to know when it had been true. And, what the hell, finally, he admitted; he wanted all of that to be true again.

When? Now! How?

This cocoon of an identity he had been hiding in, first suspecting, and then knowing that it was simply that, a cocoon, a superimposed identity, was finally cracking. It was like a fog was starting to clear.

It seemed to him that people were just pretending to be what they thought they should be, and more: that they were acting like they thought other people thought the person they were thinking they should be, should act.

But it wasn't really them. They, like himself, didn't know who they really were, so they were being who they thought they were supposed to be.

That would make life a bit confusing.

It also was a bit of a cumbersome thought for a Saturday morning walk.

He could see that it wasn't him, and finally, he wanted to remember who he really was.

Not like it was a nice idea, perhaps tomorrow.

He had questions that needed answers! Today!

He loved spring! He suspected that this spring was going to be interesting!

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"I never missed you before we met, why do I miss you now?" he hummed, it kind of hung up in his mind. "Where does this song go, and what does that mean", he wondered.

Writing songs had this trick about them: they didn't mean much if they weren't true. So what made that true? What made it not true? It felt like he did miss her before they met, he just didn't know who or where she was.

He had always known that "she" was. Whoever "she" was, he had always known that "she" was. Well, sometimes he had forgotten, or lost patience, or mistook someone else for her.

What a pain in the butt writing can be: You get this thought, it won't go away, you don't know what it means, or how to say it so that it makes any kind of sense, and it won't go away until it does! AAARRGGGG!!

And, really, he was getting it wrong. He missed her; what a wonderful thing it was to have someone you could miss! And besides that, who wanted to be missed by some sad sack Nashville guitar player who liked to write? Who wanted to be the subject of some sung before blues song? Certainly not the one he was missing!

Now, if he could make it rhyme!!

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Walking alone in the moonlight, the stars high and crisp in the winter's night, the full moon floating like his heart.

Looking across the golf course, the day's snow fresh with a crown of ice from the evenings cold, sparkling.

There along the side of the path was a bouquet.  
The flowers fresh, and pale blue, yellow and red.  
Blushed with the breath of hope, dreams just as they were born  
in lovers hearts.

A bouquet of flowers, lying beside a bench half under a winter bare bush, itself covered with fresh snow.

He picked them up, and slipped them under his arm,

And continued on his way.

Ah, Nashville on a cold winter's night did have its magic.

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He rolled over and opened his eyes, and smiled, he thought he had just thought it, and maybe he had. "Well, there you are.....". She said, "of course, where else would I be...", or maybe he just thought she said it. He pulled her close and she wrapped her arms around him for a long time. Then she said, "We're not getting anything done here, get your lazy butt out of bed", and jumped out herself. In the shower they held each other again until the water ran cold.

It never ceased to amaze him, those eyes, that flashing smile, the absolute certainty that this was home. The temper and the dedication and the trust he felt. Wasn't that something! When they had first met she had looked at him with that amazing smile and said: "Hi, I'm the girl of your dreams, someone told me you were

looking for me”. He had thought to himself, well, that maybe she was right, and she had been.

The children were into their day, the dishes done, she was set up for her day. She looked at him and said: “Write me something I really love listening to”, which, besides the apparent fact that she seemed to enjoy everything he wrote, was really all he wanted to do anyway.

## Small Pieces of Glass

Small Pieces of Glass, have you ever wondered about small pieces of glass?

This piece is from the Champagne goblets used in a wedding 50 years ago, and they are still married. It was broken when their 5 year old son ran his small car into the buffet and it fell.

The blue piece is from a glass horse her banjo playing father brought home from a tour in Wyoming. He bought it during a blizzard late at night, when he stopped for gas, and missed her.

The thin red piece is from a Christmas tree ornament that had been in the family for three generations, and had held at least 30 children spell bound. It broke when the cat jumped into the tree aiming for the bird on top, shortly before attacking the turkey. And nobody was even upset at the cat. It was Christmas.

That one is from a bus window, and I don't think I even want to tell that story.

There was one thin, curved one I think from a thermos jug a father had taken to work every day for years. Every day it went into his lunch pail just before taking the kids to school. When the thermos was all dented and worn out it went into, and fell off, the trash truck and somehow is here where I can look and wonder. I think its usefulness is not over!

This one was part of a magnifying glass Eric Jennings had used in an experiment. He wanted to focus the sun, and he did it. He also started a small fire that scared him silly. He was five years old, tried to kick dirt over it, and then ran to tell his mother. He thought he had just started a fire that was going to burn the town down. She drove back, and the fire had died out. She was so proud of him for standing up to it she bought him a sundae at the Dairy Queen. As good as the sundae was, he didn't push his luck, and was always more careful with the magnifying glass. He had that glass for 25 years, and always smiled when he looked at it.

They all started out as sand. The red one had gold put into it to make the red. Perhaps from the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico. Perhaps Humphrey Bogart could shed some light on it.

The green carried beer from Germany. High school kids threw it out the window during a celebration after a football game. Hermitage kicked Mt. Juliet's butt that year! They had already had a few and were driving a bit fast, and the police were behind them trying to pull them over, so they threw the bottle out. You would have thought the policeman would have picked it up, but they weren't actually a menace, had a designated driver, and just going a few more blocks,. He told them to slow down, and let them go. It was a great game.

I don't know what, if anything, went into the brown piece, or how it got here. I can't even guess at its history. I'll bet that is a story. Probably it was a port from a Klingon war ship that crashed unnoticed in Tennessee sometime in the '80s. Probably it got brown after a collision with an asteroid, because its shields went down during a fight with the Enterprise, which is why it crashed in the first place. It went unnoticed because this was Nashville, and it had no cow-horns on the hood. Nashville is not known for recognizing things that are different as actually existing.

From all over the world, and points in history these small pieces of glass have ended up here on the side of this road, where life rolls along.

Small Pieces of Glass!

This one is from the celebration when she said yes, that one from the despondency when she said no. This one from a Vodka bottle some drunk broke intending to rob a tourist, that one from an amyl nitrate vile broken when Mr. Fredricks was having a heart attack. It saved his life.

Small pieces of glass, who would think, looking at them?

## Sam

The dog lay his head back down on the floor and closed his eyes again. What was that that had awakened him? Oh yes, it was a word he had dreamed. What was it? That was it “serendipitous”! Wasn’t that a wonderful thought! Why was it that sometimes the things that have the most effect on your life come when your belief in them is nearly gone?

In this case it had happened that he was the leader of a pack of wolves in the north woods of Canada. He wasn’t really a wolf, but he was the biggest and strongest, and fastest of this group.

When he was very young he had been continually awakened by their song, and for some reason simply had to follow. As it turned out, his obvious place was as leader. It wasn’t the most gentle of processes, but it was logical. It wasn’t even that he was trying to be a wolf, he didn’t even fully understand them, but there he was, and he could sing that song.

He had loved that song! It had breathed and whispered and shouted things about life he had only thought or hoped, or dreamed existed. It had shouted on the wind, those things that seemed to be in his bones, running through his veins, pumped through all of the tissues of his body, inscribed deep into each cell.

A message of freedom!

That same body that now lay here almost asleep in front of a fire.

Serendipitous! That word that could have many contexts! Wonderful word!

In his life, lessons had been learned hard. There was little forgiveness for mistakes, or hesitations, decisions counted, and when you made one, there you were.

And there he had been. The winter had been long and hard, and still had a while to last. It was his job to see that they ate. And they were barely getting by. Hanging on by a tooth you might say, although the joke was uncomfortably close to the truth.

They had come across the carcass of a rabbit in the woods. Normally he would have been cautious and sniffed around, but it had been so long. He was the leader and it was his right to eat first, and so he dove in.

But something was different. Before he actually reached the rabbit a thin piece of wire closed around his neck. He didn't think too much about it and tried to pull back, but it wouldn't let him; in fact it had gotten tighter. He rolled on the ground, and bit at that thin piece of entrapment, but all it did was continue to get tighter. As fast or strong as he was, the wire pulled tighter around his throat. And it was making him weak.

He remembers watching the pack, how they were watching him. It was so oddly detached, they were looking at him as they had viewed that old bear they had killed last fall. They would dart in and cut him, and cut him, from all sides. They were so many, and so fast the bear hadn't been able to hold them off. Finally they sat back and watched him bleed and get weak and die. The dog himself had darted in to finish him off. The look in the pack's eyes was the same.

The look in the bear's eyes had been an odd combination of sadness, resignation, tremendous pride. Of a tiredness that permeated his great heart, and profound relief. He had dreamed about that bear's eyes for months.

After a while of his struggling against the unyielding wire the big almost black young one he had been having so much trouble with had gotten up and dove for him. There was just enough slack in the wire that he could whirl and tear a long gash in that troublemaker's ear, but it was just the start. The whole pack was on him, they were everywhere, biting and tearing. He saw his mate diving for his side, and her teeth were already red. She made a great tear in his side; he felt her teeth sliding over his ribs. They grated and sort of bounced. But really he felt no pain, just very tired.

He wasn't really a wolf, but he was living with them. He knew what they thought of weakness, and how they dealt with it. But he had thought himself somewhat immune to their natures, and, well, he just somehow thought it wouldn't apply to him, or it would never come to this, or something else not very important. And he was so tired. The wire, and the teeth of his friends, had taken their toll. So this is how it is, he thought, this is how that wonder filled song ends. Damn that was a beautiful song. Still is, really. Maybe a little bit edgy. Maybe that is part of what makes it so beautiful.

That is about all he was thinking when he lay down. He thought he heard a shout from a human, the sound of a gun. He even thought he felt himself being carried, and warmth, a soft comfortable warmth. Like his mother's stomach where he would lay and sleep after nursing. He wasn't thinking about much, but he was warm.

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When he opened his eyes, what he saw, were those eyes. They were deep, with tremendous compassion, like the bear's, but it wasn't the bear. They were curious, and very, very interested, like he had never seen before. Way in the back there was the hint of laughter and a shadow of relief like he had seen in the eyes of a rabbit he had chased. When it was certain it had gotten away the rabbit had looked back one last time over his shoulder with that victorious laughing look in its eyes. He hadn't laughed at the time, he was hungry and there went dinner. Laughing! Thinking about it now, it had been funny!

But he had seen these eyes before. Where? He closed his own eyes and went back to sleep. It was so comfortable, and he was so weary. Way down deep, he just needed to sleep.

Somewhere in the background there was a low pulsing droning sound. Thinking it now, it had sounded like a didgeridoo, he didn't know that then. He just marveled at the low undulating sound that sounded like rocks rolling on a river bottom, or tree limbs groaning in the wind, like ice just before breaking up in the spring, or the ground as it thawed.

He dreamed, and in his dreams he remembered his dreams.

There had been the wire, and the pack, and his mate, and then too he had been so tired, and as he lay down, there were those sounds, and the music of the wind high in the trees, it had seemed to be going away.

And then there was nothing. For a while there were just fragments of memories. Terrible heat, and sometimes shivering uncontrollably. A burning pain that seemed to be trying to consume him.

It seemed one time he had woken up and seen a great hairy monster reaching toward him with its claws. He had used all of his strength in trying to bite it once,

and it seemed his teeth had grasped something. But that was all the strength he had had. As his head sank back down he remembered the claws touching him, but instead of tearing at him, they calmed him, and he had gone back to sleep.

That was it! Those eyes! They were the eyes of the monster. In his dream when he had bitten the claw, he had looked into the eyes, and what he had seen was that compassion and interest. There was pain and surprise, but no anger. Just care. It hadn't been what he had expected.

When next he opened his eyes he felt better, more rested. And there were those eyes. And there was the monster! Only it wasn't a monster, it was a woman. He remembered from when he was young. She was making sounds. He remembered them too! "There you are" she said.

"Well of course," he thought "Where else would I be if you were looking at me?"

"There were times I'd thought you had gone. But you just kept coming back! Are you hungry?" Those noises again.

"I can't even stand up, let alone run off, how am I going to be 'gone' anywhere! When is she going to make some noise that means anything?" he thought. And then: "Hungry? Now, that makes sense!" He didn't notice but his tail had made a weak flopping motion. She smiled.

"That's kind of pretty" he thought.

He noticed a bandage on her hand and remembered the dream. "Oh!"

He tried to move his head to lick the wound but couldn't.

She brought a bowl of some warm liquid. He was so thirsty, and it warmed him. She reached toward him and he growled. He didn't really mean to, but it just sort of came out. Only friends could touch each other. And he knew about friends.

She pulled her hand back, and simply said "Okay".

He went back to sleep.

For the longest time it went on like this. He would wake up; she would be there

with something to eat and drink and he would sleep. Gradually he was awake for longer periods of time, and he seemed to be getting stronger. And then he could even stand up and walk a bit.

After that he would go outside and lay in the sun. It had been a while and spring had come. The sun was warm.

He started to watch her. What was a woman doing in the north woods alone?

She would talk to him and he was beginning to learn what the sounds meant.

She was a human and of course, had a gun. But then she had a small box with a round thing sticking out of it. Sometimes she would point it at something and look through the other side and move her finger. Sometimes she would frown, and sometimes she would smile. Sometimes she would point it at him. He wasn't sure about that, but nothing happened. What good was it? She would point it at the sky or a tree or a bunch of birds far away. She would point it at a marmot, or elk grazing in the yard, and they would just walk away. One night she spent the whole night pointing it at the moon. Mostly it was coming or going from behind clouds! She should have pointed the gun at the elk, they could eat that. What good was that little box?

She would laugh and smile, sometimes she tried to make him look at some pieces of paper. She was so gently...curious. She would try to look at what he was looking at. She would try to show him what she was looking at. It was just so... nice.

Once when he had eaten something off the table, she threw a towel at him and chased him all around the outside of the cabin. It was funny; he was a lot faster than she was, but he stayed just out of her reach. She had slipped in the mud and fallen down, and he went back to see that she wasn't hurt. She was just pretending and had almost caught him by his ears! Tricky woman!

Sometimes she would try to touch him, and he wouldn't growl anymore, just move away. At first he moved all the way across the room and, then, just his head.

Have you ever listened to spring? It sounds like light green and kind of whispers and giggles. It has this little skip to it. And somewhere in the bottom is that didgeridoo!

It seemed like forever, but probably wasn't very long, when he felt strong again. It was spring, and he had been being a wolf. So, what was he doing lying around a cabin with a woman and a silly box? He should be off chasing caribou. Ever since he had first come to the woods it is what he had done.

So one fine morning he just trotted off. He looked back once and she was in the door, just looking at him. She wasn't smiling, just looking with this resigned curiosity, like she wanted to say something. Actually, so did he.

He hadn't gone more than a mile or two, and the silence of the woods closed around him. He could hear his breathing and the soft pad of his feet on the forest floor. He could hear squirrels in the trees above his head; he could hear the birds, and their young hungry ones. He could hear the wind, and the branches and the leaves. He could even hear his heart.

It was saying "What do you want?" It was saying "You've pretended to be a wolf before. Is that what you want? Or just what you know?"

He didn't remember ever having so much trouble with his heart before.

He didn't know what he wanted; he only knew what he knew. He needed to know how to combine what he knew with what he wanted. Whatever that was! It did seem to be more back with that woman with her boxes and cabin, than it did down the trail he was on.

He was learning!

Noisy heart!

So he turned around and went back. At the edge of the clearing he lay down to think for a while. She came to the door and sat on the sill, and watched him. All of that night she sat there and watched him, and he lay there and watched her. Once she did get up and get herself some dinner. Damn! He thought to himself. She seemed to enjoy it.

When the dawn came he got up and walked into the cabin. She simply stood aside and let him go and lie down. She didn't say a word.

Isn't that a song! It rang free with promise in the dawn, raged full and strong at mid day, and grew quiet, sometimes rich, sometimes reflective, and sometimes almost mournful in the twilight.

At night it seemed almost a different song entirely.

It would prowl through your heart.

It could stir like goblins on tiptoes, sneaking up to a child's bed.

It could be restless like teenagers with new driver's licenses, a tank full of gas, and their whole their whole lives ahead of them. On a Saturday night.

It could scream at the moon as only a first heartbreak could, or sigh at the relief that allowed you to love that much in the first place.

When you were older it took more than that song to love that much, but it had to be part of it. And you knew when it was being sung, and you knew when you were singing it.

It could moan like a stallion being castrated.

Or have the bubbly laugh of a four year child.

It definitely could keep him awake.

Its resonances made his toes twitch in his dreams, and he would pace. Some nights he would go out of the cabin and back in. And out of the cabin and back in. She would yawn, leave the door open and go to bed. He had learned to let her scratch his ears, and she would do that, and say "It's Okay". He would think "Yeah, right! You just go to sleep, and I'll just make sure no elephants come and steal the house!"

It was almost like he itched, everywhere, with nowhere to scratch.

The thing was that he was older now, and this part of it took a different voice than he had sung wild in the hills. He was every bit as free, but he was free to stay, and he wasn't sure how.

In the dawn they would wake up. She would drink coffee and sit on the sill, and watch as the world got light and listening to the birds singing with that boundless enthusiasm for the new day! It always amazed him that they would sing that way for every dawn. Even if it were cold and rainy. Bird brains they may have, but they were right!

She would sit for a while and watch and listen and drink coffee. So would he. He didn't like coffee though, it was bitter. She had given him some to try once when he kept pushing his nose into her cup. Bitter stuff!

Her name was Susan. He learned that one day when she kept pointing at herself and saying "Susan", and she would point at herself again and say "Susan". He got it the first time, and felt like saying "Look lady, I live here; you can't be dumb and survive"! But really looking at her, she was so sincere, and her eyes were so clear, and she really wanted him to know what her name was. He jumped up and down like a puppy, and barked. He knew what her name was and just wanted to thank her for caring and for being who she was.

Then she pointed at him and said "Hum...what is your name?" He tried to tell her, it would have been hard for her to pronounce, but she thought he was still excited about her name.

She said "Phoenix?" which sounded to him like a sound you would make when you had a cold. Not anything he wanted to answer to.

She said "Lazarus?" He just walked away from that one. It was like a bunch of feathers in your mouth.

For being such a smart lady, she was sounding pretty dumb!

"Prince?" Next she was going to tie a pink ribbon and bow around his neck. He kept on walking. Maybe there was a porcupine, or a couple of bobcats that wanted to fight.

"Sam?" Well, that was better than a mouth full of quills. Let's end this pantomime of fun. He could live with that. Actually he kind of liked it. It was strong, had some dignity, and didn't take too long to say.

The mud of spring had dried, and every day she would go out wandering. This he could understand.

She would take her gun and that funny little box.

Mostly she used the box. She would point it at something and move her finger. She was always looking at things, and he began to see what she was looking for. She would see birds feeding their young and point the box. She would see bear cubs playing and point the box. She would see a sunset behind two elk fighting over a doe, and she would point the box.

One time a mother bear didn't understand the box and thought her cubs were in danger. She stood tall against the late afternoon sky, and he had gone in to tell her that Susan was not a threat. Susan kept backing away and pointing the box as the bear and he carried on their discussion.

Later that night as she was caring for a couple of scratches he had picked up during that talk, she had buried her face in the fur around his neck and cried for a long time.

He tried to tell her that it really was nothing, just the way things were done where he was from. You know? The truth. But while he could understand her sounds, he couldn't make her understand his. He had to show her.

Finally he had started to look at the pieces of paper she would show him, and what do you know! There were sunsets, and elk, and there he was chasing a fish! And the talk with the bear! All on a piece of paper. Wasn't that something!

Sometimes it wasn't very pretty. She would see a snare, like he had been caught in, and she would point the box. Sometimes there were animals that hadn't been as lucky as he, dead on the ground. Strangled by their struggles for freedom. Sometimes there would be only the leg or foot of some animal who had chewed it off to gain release. Sometimes the body would be there, it had only been caught by a leg, and had starved to death. And the carrion eaters had feasted.

She would get very serious and point the box a lot.

She would also hunt for food, and he could help her do that. He could range wide and herd the animal she wanted toward her, and she could shoot it.

Really, she tried very hard to be quiet in the woods, and was pretty good.

But as good as she was, it was a lot like stalking a squirrel by cutting the tree down.

And he liked helping her; they were like a small pack should be. A team.

Once he returned to the cabin after one of the walks he would take, and there was a strange man at the door. He was dirty, and they were yelling at each other.

It turns out he was the trapper who had been placing the snare traps. He was the one whose trap had caught him. It also turned out that the “pictures” she had been taking had been in some “magazines”, and that a lot of people were mad at him because of it.

As the man was just yelling and getting more agitated, Sam kind of moved up behind him, just at the back edge of where the man could see, and growled quietly. Actually he wanted to tear the tendon from the back of that fat leg, but didn't.

Susan said she understood about his “making a living”, but that those traps were cruel and illegal, and he shouldn't be doing it. She was going to keep on taking her “pictures”. If he didn't change, he would have to go.

She was standing up there just like that mother bear! Wasn't that something to see!

Sam moved just a little bit closer, and the man glanced at him, said something low, and left.

Susan let out a deep sigh, took the rifle from beside the door jam where it had been leaning, and sat down on the sill.

“Well!” she had said.

He was still thinking it would have been kind of satisfying to tear the tendon out.

Yes, “serendipitous”; that certainly was a word!

If he hadn't recognized that song, he wouldn't have run with the wolves.  
If Susan hadn't felt like a walk, he would have died.

If he hadn't chased that fish, his "picture" wouldn't have been in a "magazine".

If he hadn't come back from his walk when he did, there is no telling what would have happened.

He had no idea where that song would go from here. It still blew strong through his veins, and echoed in the wind. It still held him enthralled with its great rolling almost awkward rhythms, hints of promises shouted in the moonlight, and its stark, amazing beauty.

"Serendipitous". What a wonderful word he thought as he drifted off to sleep.

## North Beach

So you want to play guitar, huh? Who are you going to play it for? What do you have to say?

For a number of years I just wandered around the country, all over it, simply looking at the scenery, talking to the people, seeing what was different, and what was similar about different parts of the country.

Have you ever ridden in the back of a pickup truck across Canada? More than twenty four hours across a huge wheat field. That wheat field goes from nearly the Arctic Circle to the Gulf of Mexico. It goes from the Great Lakes and Mississippi River to the Rockies and it feeds the people of two countries. In the north, in the summer, it stays light almost all night, so you can ride in the back of a truck and read a book at eleven PM, while the Northern Lights are dancing on the horizon! It is amazing.

I sat in a road house somewhere north of Lake Superior and listened to a young cowboy in an argument with his wife about taking a job a thousand miles away. He was saying he didn't want to work as some other man's hands, building another man's dreams. He wanted to build one for them. It was a country song, and they were simply talking about life.

I was drinking beer and taking notes!

I hope he got his ranch, and the two of them made it.

I rode with a young kid driving a logging truck with a full load down a grade on a back road in Wyoming. At one point he got this nervous smile, looked over at me and said "there went the brakes!" I thought: "hum..." but kept a straight face. We made it!

The way I saw it, that kid earned his spurs.

I changed into clean shorts as soon as I had the chance.

Enough time was spent in Mexico to be able to get across to people, but more

important, I could understand them. Part of why I went there was a curiosity: It seemed that what most conversations I would hear meant nothing. People took them very seriously, but they weren't really saying anything.

I thought it was the language.

After some time down there, riding bulls in the streets, and seeing fiestas with 10,000 people, four rock and roll bands, maybe ten Mariachi bands, and fire works going off in the town square, one morning I was listening to a couple of waitresses talking in the hotel. They were saying the same things as waitresses in Tulsa!

Maybe it wasn't the language!

I talked with a door to door vacuum cleaner salesman one time in Illinois. He kept saying he wished he could live like me. I thought "Yeah right, a couple of nights ago I nearly froze to death, and last month was stranded in Death Valley!" What I said was "Well?"

I don't think he ever left his job.

There was a West Virginia coal miner who had recently quit mining and bought a small farm in southern Ohio. He said in the past year he had watched the mine ceiling come down on his father, and then his brother; they were both only fifteen or twenty feet in front of him. It had gotten so that he had to get drunk to get up nerve enough to go into that hole in the ground. When he realized he was turning into a drunk, he knew it needed to change, as he was already dead. He quit and bought his small farm. He worried about the money, but didn't have to crawl down into the ground anymore. He had stopped drinking.

That, I thought, was a wonderful story!

I was playing all the time. If I wasn't actively doing something else, I was playing. From Big Sur and the Oregon coast to Maine, I was there. From the San Juan Islands to New Orleans, I was there. In the winter, in the summer, I was there. Until the elk came down from the high country and the bears hibernated in the Rockies, I was there.

And always I was playing. I thought about it some years later, and really, for about six years my guitar was never further than an arms length away.

I thought, finally, I had something to say!

The stories that could be told about that period of time!

I had played some coffee houses in Boston and Provincetown, had been run out of a couple of Oklahoma bars. I really wasn't any good, and didn't play country; still don't. It did seem there was a lot to learn about being in front of people and getting them to hear what you were trying to do. What you were trying to say with the music.

And there was a real difference between knowing what you were doing and just trying to survive the set. Being lucky. I was at least smart enough to know that. Besides, I wasn't often that lucky.

In San Francisco's North Beach there were places to play for tips. I was looking for someplace to learn how really to do what I was trying to do. I was tired of pretending. It didn't seem either real or honest. It seemed Davis's intensity, or Lightning Hopkins's rock solid ability to just sit there and play that amazing stuff was something you had to pay for.

There was that ragged line that you could play if you could hear it. You had to listen fast, and play what you heard. Part of what you were trying to play was the way the room felt. You had to practice listening. It was so dim in the tourist places, and college coffee houses. Those places felt more like a Tulsa coffee shop.

Don't get me wrong, Tulsa is a fine place, but coffee shops can be a little tame!

The alleyways and sidewalks of upper Grant echoed with the bohemian's experimental spirit. Ferlengetti had his book store, Kerouac had roamed and written of a wild side I had my curiosities about; and there were these nasty places I had seen Dave Von Ronk play years before. Timid, perhaps, but I had my guitar, and my tunes, and I was going to learn to play them. Stubborn? Definitely! Timid and stubborn, now there is an interesting combination. There were going to be lessons to learn about a lot more than music, and I didn't have a clue!

Ah...North Beach. The tourists, the pimps, the whores, the junkies and thieves,

the characters!

It really isn't all that different a game than Nashville, in that you survive because you make your mind up about it. To borrow one of the great seminal Nashville songwriter Harlan Howard's lines of advice: "no one invited you here!".

There was one guy who was a dope dealer. He had been in prison and was released on parole, but he was confined to North Beach. What he would do is get kids on the street strung out, and have them steal stuff, and rob people to pay for their habits. The police knew this and kept him on the streets of North Beach. Every so often they would lean on him, and he would give them a couple of the kids he had gotten strung out and stealing, just so he could keep his parole.

It was the oddest kind of job security I ever saw.

There was Joe, who was a folk singer. He would get drunk and some other drunk would give him a hard time. Joe would put down the guitar, and the two of them would go outside and settle the discussion. After which Joe would come back and finish his set. His girl friend's father had given her a car one time, and Joe hated not buying it for her himself. One night Joe lost the car. It took a couple of weeks to find where he had parked it. Before he lost it he had wrecked it. She had a temper, and I think Joe would have rather never found it.

There was George. George was a small blonde girl who wore Elizabethan clothes, complete with a sword. She also carried a .38 pistol in her shorts. One night some Hells Angels came into the bar and one of them told her to give him the sword. She simply told him "Why don't you just come and get it?" It wasn't an invitation. His friends all said "Yeah, why don't you just go and get it!" The Angel found other things more interesting.

George couldn't really sing, not even close. She couldn't tune her guitar, but what she could do was get people dancing on table tops at 2 AM. She was amazing! There would be nobody on the streets; it would be pouring rain, and for her set the place would be packed.

Mean as a snake, but I adored her.

There was J.C. Burris who was a blues singer. He was great! But he kept you on your toes. If you weren't doing the set well he would sit in the audience and start

to sing and play harmonica. He would steal the room right out from under you.

Michael Wilhelm had played with a band called The Charlatans, who had had a couple of albums and hits. His girl friend had lived with another old friend in Mendocino, but that is another story. Michael was also into the blues, and could play. We would discuss what made the best slide material and cop each other's chops.

We kept those places alive Monday through Friday.

There was a guy named Bobby Coffman. Bobby was a beat poet. Years later Von Ronk asked if he still spit his beer on you when he was drunk and talking. I said, yeah!

Coffman was amazing. He was the real thing, and the closest thing to a friend I had there. I was there for the music, and he was there for the life. There wasn't much difference!

The Great Experiment!

He knew what I was about.

He watched as I learned, and in his way would let me know when I was doing something right.

Sometimes he would sit on the stage and listen. One night when I had figured out how to fake it, and was faking it. He got up and walked between me and the audience, looked me in the eye, and said: "that's bullshit, and walked off the stage!"

It was a kind of tutelage you can't buy, but had an honesty about it I wanted. Nobody else cared enough to have an opinion.

I learned how to put notes out there and tap somebody on the head with them. It was absolutely uncivilized. It took belief in what you were playing.

I learned how to make them quiet, and to listen and laugh. And yes, I learned from George about the attitude necessary to demand the room be full.

In North Beach it took a lack of civilization that I have not found elsewhere. But that willingness to be totally uncivilized is a vital ingredient to performing. Give it

everything you have.

Bobby had thought his writing was bullshit about eight years before, and had decided not to write for ten years, and then find out if he still had anything to say. I had left North Beach when his book came out, and the reviews were glowing. When he died, shortly after that, there was a full page article about him in the Examiner. I had no idea what he had done. He was kind of like a bohemian Harlan Howard, both in impact and involvement.

One night I looked up and there were a couple of guys robbing some guy in the middle of the room. One of them had a knife, in the middle of my set! I informed the bouncer, and the matter was resolved.

One night I come out of a club and there was this guy and his girlfriend. They were very stoned. He pulled a knife on me and asked me what it was worth to me. With a very straight face and total confidence I looked him in the eye and said “I don’t know, let me see it”. He handed me the knife. His girlfriend looked at him like he may not be the great provider she had considered him to be. I gave him fifty cents, and they stumbled off.

Down the street there was tourist bus, I could hear the tour guide pointing us out as the “Bohemians written about by Kerouac and Ginsberg”.

I didn’t know about any of the other “Bohemians” hanging around, I was just a kid from the suburbs trying to play the guitar!

One night the room was giving a friend a hard time. I got mad and was up next. I got into talking about how they could come up here and get drunk, and hang out on the wild side. They could earn a righteous hangover, but what did we get out of it? I pulled off my boot and pointed to a hole in my sock, and said “holes in our socks, man, put some damn money in the hat!”

I did it just right, and they all laughed, and the hats were great that night!

North Beach!

A few months after I had left, I went back to visit. That same guy had turned into a heroin addict and his girl friend a whore to pay for it. I always hoped they survived. He could write some great songs, and their relationship had love in it.

The place could break your heart.

You learned to sing the song. You learned that no matter what was happening in the room, or with your life, if you didn't sing the song, it wouldn't get sung. And you learned to decide if the song were important enough to you to sing in the first place.

Later you learned that you couldn't really go back from what you had learned. You may change focus, you may change direction, but there was a part of that education that remained with you. You were never going to be a middle class history teacher. But you did know how to give it everything you had, tonight, and then give it more tomorrow.

## All These Years

He opened his eyes, rolled over and simply watched her breathe as she slept in the dawn.

He reached out and caressed her tummy softly. In her sleep she reached down and held his hand there.

When was it? Nearly 40 years ago he had been playing a bar in Red River, when his show was over he had gone down the road to a tavern with a band and a pool table.

On that table he had gotten into a game with the prettiest girl in the room. She had been walking away with his last \$10. He was watching what he had been watching and thinking about through the whole game, rather than the game, when she turned and said, "You should never bet the farm, honey".

To this day he didn't know how or why he said it so easy, but with a flippant smile he said, "I didn't bet the ranch, Dear Heart, just my last \$10. Why don't you buy us some beers with it, we can dance a while, and I'll show you the ranch, you'll love it".

She paused a moment and said, "Why not".

They had danced and laughed, found more money in the bottom of their pockets, and woke up in the back of his pickup on two tire tracks 50 miles out on the mesa southwest from Taos, half way to his ranch.

He had 6,000 acres of his own, 40,000 Bureau of Land Management acres, a small house and a couple of thousand cows.

They called it home.

And she did love it!

Between the ranch and the music they had raised two children who were out on their own now.

With the music he had shown her Hawaii, Japan, Australia, England, Ireland,

Germany, Spain, Greece, Italy, and a whole lot of the U.S..

They had learned each others hearts, learned how to fight, and fear, and love each other at the same time.

They had learned to share and learn all of each others hearts.

They had learned how to really love.

They had learned how to truly trust.

Every day they still learned how to really love, like it was a new thing.

They had built it and earned it.

And, he thought, it was good.

He caressed that same tummy he had known and caressed when it was flat and young, round and glowing when pregnant, which he now adoringly called “his ¼ acre of heaven”.

Leaning over he kissed that tummy, and her hand, and said “Good Morning Dear Heart, I’ll go start breakfast. I told you I didn’t bet the ranch, just my last 10 bucks, and you know what?”

She murmured sleepily “We won!”

## Watching Windows

He wrote. Often times he would go sit in a pub and watch people, and let the things that were floating around in his head take shape.

Tonight was really interesting. There was something he wanted to tell his daughter. Something she wouldn't understand for 20 or 30 years, when she would have the same questions. Something about his real legacy to her.

What would he really want to show her? Perhaps the dawn on the big island, or sitting on a motel porch in Canada, in the center of those vast prairies, just reading by the light of the sky at 11 PM, and watching the Auroa Borealis waver and dance in the far northern sky. Perhaps the cold spring wind on the Mendocino coast. Perhaps they both would share the joy of her first born, or he actually would be able to walk her down the isle.

Really, though, she would have the pictures from her own adventures, from the life that was hers. What really was his job alone to give her, to know that she understood?

Floating around his head was the answer.

He sipped the Guinness, and watched the people. He was on a porch, 15, or 20 feet away from the windows separating the inside from the outside. The sun was setting so the diners had mostly closed the drapes from the glare.

There was one set of curtains, however, that wasn't entirely closed. Through it he could see the center of a table, two sets of hands and knees sitting across from each other.

And he watched, made small talk from some of the other people on the porch, but watched.

Those hands, first from one side, then the other, would reach across the table, and enclose the other, a finger would caress a wrist, a knee would touch. It was so extraordinarily intimate, in such a public place.

He didn't think he would have been able to observe that dance if he were inside the room. It was so quiet, part of their conversation, whatever that was, and amazingly personal.

As it was, he felt like he was intruding

He reflected on his own life, and how the moments like that he could count on one hand.

That quiet, calm, totally certain confidence.

He was learning it, but hadn't known it.

Those hands in the window were a special thing, and he was privileged to be here observing.

During that evening he had gotten into a conversation with a couple who had been married 25 years, were raising three children, were obviously in love, and having one of their two weekly nights alone.

Except for him.

Turns out they were good friends with an old protagonist, whom he always felt would have been an entirely different relationship, in a different environment.

A wonderful evening.

They asked if he wouldn't crash their party next week.

And what was funny, was that they left, and that thing that he had been trying to grasp, hit him.

It went like this:

Dear Darling Daughter:

You grow,  
Your brilliance  
Amazes me,

Every day.

Your character!

We talk  
I learn.  
You fight  
Pretty good.

Actually,  
Really good,  
I learn.

Your life is your own,  
Your world.

Yours to build.

Most primarily it  
Is you  
Knowing you.

Your Mother  
And I  
Have our own truth  
Which is proving  
To be true, and stable.  
You need that.

She is she,  
And has proven  
To be  
A wonderful mother,  
A wonderful friend.  
To you.

You know you  
Much better

Because of her.  
And you know  
Me.

I seek teach,  
Or try to show,  
Or seek to reach  
Your dreams.

To demonstrate.

I only know:  
To reach  
Can be to achieve.

It seems  
I can show best  
By achieving  
My own dreams.

By staying on  
My own pony.

Showing  
By realizing  
My own truths.

As unique to me  
As yours are to you.

When the dreams have drifted  
The dust settled,  
The truths so contained  
In the context of their own breath  
Are clearer

I would prefer to have  
demonstrated  
to you

the passion  
the strength  
the persistence  
necessary

to build  
from thought  
into the world.

It is worth it!

Although,  
Dear Darling Daughter,  
You do seem to already  
Have grasped  
That concept.

Wasn't that something!!

The things you learn, the things you want to show, mostly from watching  
windows.

## **In the Dawn**

Billy sat and looked out over the field in front of his porch; he had a small cabin, on 50 acres in the hills between Mendocino and Willits.

It was above, and really a bit beyond the coastal fog which occurred on most mornings, but this morning there was none. He could see over a couple of ridges, and all the way to the ocean, which crested blue and white in the dawn.

He could look down over the field starting to blossom with spring, over the pine and redwood trees, over, and over until the trees turned into that California coastline green, of what was native here.

He was home.

It was dawn. He hadn't slept much; his plane had arrived around midnight into San Francisco from Cincinnati. He had retrieved his truck from the long term parking and had made the 4 hour drive from there.

A six week tour, from Boston, New Orleans, Denver, Seattle, San Diego, San Francisco, Fresno, Topeka, Wichita, Las Vegas, Portland, New York. Six weeks, all over the damn place, believing this room full of people he would never know, were his friends. Making them believe it. They were, really, but you had to get so personal with strangers you forgot what personal really was. You touched lives, and they touched yours, and the songs gained new life. The life you all, all of you and them, breathed into them. And new songs got written.

It had been a six week tour, and he had gotten home just before dawn. Now he was sitting watching a new day arrive, and he was home.

He was tired, and the dawn was glorious.

There was a hawk being chased by five or six sparrows. He guessed that old boy just had wandered into the wrong neighborhood.

He said to himself: "yeah buddy".

He looked out at the garden, and the children's toys, he took a sip of the Guinness he had picked up at the all night, and he smiled.

His Guinevere slept inside, her name was Susana, he called her Missy, and he loved her, and Sarah, and Sam, and they were his whole world, along with the rooms full of strangers, and the dreams and the dramas that made the songs, and the whole thing worked.

And wasn't that something, and it was dawn, and he was home.

He would unload the truck when he woke up.

## Susan

The small cloth covered Cessna had circled the clearing and dropped like a piece of hail from the overcast November sky. The clearing looked smaller than the front yard of a Santa Monica house. The plane had touched down, bounced a couple of times and stopped like the ground was covered with adhesive, not a foot too soon.

She had been in hundreds of similar landings, and she never had learned to relax. The pilot however did it all with mostly one hand, and a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He had a three day growth of beard, a sweat stained shirt and untied boots. He flew like he was just going to the store for some groceries.

Maybe he would bring her stomach with the next load.

After six more trips he had brought all of her stuff, and supplies for the winter. He said he would check in, and to use the radio in an emergency. His door had closed and the plane had taken off from that postage stamp sized clearing with a gravity defying leap into the sky just moments before the remnants of the summer were buried under four feet of snow.

She had wanted solitude to search out what was still truth for her; for a breath of her own air, and it looked like she would have her chance.

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For as long as she could remember life had looked to her like moments in time. Like those old time movies where you cranked the handle and each frame moved across the eyepiece. You could crank fast or slow and that was the pace of that frame by frame movie.

There were moments of extraordinary beauty, and sensitivity, and there were moments of extraordinary pain and suffering and anguish. Life breathed in the moment by moment experience of it. It felt to her like she was watching that breath.

In her late teens her muse handed her the keys to her dreams:

A camera!

Her father had given it to her. He did it on a Saturday afternoon. It was one of those rare Saturday afternoons when the serendipities of life had let them have some time together knowing they both would appreciate the opportunity.

He had handed it to her with a smile, but his eyes had shone with a vast curiosity. He wanted to see how she received it. Would she grasp the potential?

She had held it for a second wondering. He had said very gently “you can take pictures. You can learn to catch those moments you are always looking at.” Then he had paused, and then said “Those moments when a person’s whole life changes”. He had said it very softly, like he had been talking almost to himself.

The shadow of a cloud, the hint of a smile, the way the entire world would feel different in the light of spring, or autumn were all there in those moment by moment pictures she saw.

A heartfelt greeting, or the snide feeling from someone who didn’t really mean it, were also there to see if you really looked. And if you could see it, you could photograph it, and those photos would reflect life the way it actually was lived.

Her father...wasn’t that a story, but he had been right. You could catch those moments

And the camera! It was almost like it had a mind of its own. Her job was almost simply to carry it around, and make sure it was someplace it would want to see.

The other thing about it was that over the years she had realized it didn’t have an opinion, it simply saw. There were no moral judgments with the camera, it simply took pictures of what was there. She at times wished it were as simple with her.

She had talked with older photographers about young soldiers. They said it was the same in Viet Nam, and the other wars they had photographed. The young men and women had come doing their duty, with bright faces, into wars that were not their job to judge. The cameras had caught their faces as they did things fulfilling that duty, which, for the rest of their lives, they would be unable to talk about. They had done things doing this duty that would keep them awake nights, wondering about the fate of their souls.

Those particular photos never got in the newspapers, or on TV.

But the camera didn't care.

Cameras were like that. A camera saw it all, and you simply carried it around and fed it film. It fascinated her.

For years it had fascinated her. She had traveled the world, went to both poles retracing famous explorer's steps. She trekked through strange jungles; She saw and followed migrations of exotic animals. She went to the tops of the tallest mountains and sailed over vast deserts in hot air balloons. She traveled to the edge of space carrying her camera.

She saw and finally learned that the glory of life was in the living of it.

The camera didn't care, but she did; and she knew she had seen the best and the worst, or thought she had.

She wanted to see if she and the camera could help change rather than simply record what was there.

It was at that point she had met her future husband. He had been an attorney who worked a lot on ecological and social issues.

He had the ability to stand at the gates of Hell and tell the Devil to go home.

They had fought and won wars that involved growth rather than bombs.

Their big mistake came when they forgot their working lives were not necessarily their personal lives. Sometime during the glory of the confusion between their professional lives and their personal lives they had gotten married, and had a child. A boy obviously named Robert, not Bob.

Robert had shown her what real trust was, what real contribution was. He had taught her how to look at life from the viewpoint of what was best for everyone. In some ways Robert had shown her what her own life was. What being alive actually was. Not an idea, but an action!

She had spent a decade with Robert. During this time the camera had not been gathering dust. There were birthday parties, and bike wrecks. There were

swimming lessons, and trees climbed. There were teeth lost, and words found, and the camera was hungry.

Things had become more distant with her husband. She had always thought her actions had spoken loudly enough to project her reality to him. In fact, to him, her actions were simply an extension of his planning.

The camera couldn't capture her astonishment at this realization.

One thing had led to another, and in her life, as with her parents, there was a divorce.

With impeccable lawyer's one sided logic, and in ways she couldn't counter, he destroyed her credibility, or made her feel that way. He left her wondering if she ever really had any credibility at all. This included even her relationship with her son.

It truly was amazing.

When the call came from the National Geographic about a project in the north woods of Canada, she had jumped at it.

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It seemed that for two or three weeks all she did was sleep, unpack her personal things, as Spartan as they were, and set up the equipment.

National Geographic had called because they wanted a pictorial essay on what life was like in the Mackenzie River basin in the new millennia. They didn't want a sentimental retrospective, but a photo story of what life actually looked and felt like in the 21st century and she was known as one of the best. She could write novels with her photographs.

It was going to be a long project.

The living arrangements were incongruous in that while the cabin was located miles from any road, heated and lit by lanterns and wood. There was computer equipment and satellite uplinks so she could send her work in, and also a phone connection with the outside world. Cooking was done over

a wood burning stove, and water pumped by a hand pump, and then heated over the stove. There were both a gasoline powered generator, and a solar collector to make sure this contact was maintained. The project was not to revisit the past, but to view a very remote area, and remain connected with the modern world. She could call Robert on his birthday, and send emails to him, and others of her friends she maintained contact with.

It was so beautiful it would take her breath away simply by walking out the door. Sometimes in the dawn there would be elk or moose or deer clearing away the snow in the clearing, or eating from the lower branches of the trees. If she opened the door very quietly she could sit and watch. At night she could hear the wolves.

Theirs was such a song! It echoed the sounds of the wind in the trees, either with a light breeze, or bending under the heavy gusts of a storm. It had the potential of great violence, but there was no threat. It thrilled her! The James Deans of the wild country! The Robert Johnsons, John Hammonds, Etta James of the Arctic Circle! Miles Davis, under Northern Lights! Bitches Brew, carried on moonbeams! Sometimes she would sit up all night listening.

Other times she would just sit and think up ways to try to describe it to Robert! But there really wasn't anything down there, perhaps the way it feels just before a big storm hits, the temperature drops, and the wind comes up, and you get filled with anticipation. The tremendous unpredictable strength of a half tamed horse. Trained just enough so you could sit on its back, but not enough to give you any more than the barest illusion of control. But there wasn't anything half tamed about this sound! It was all alive with no reservations!

After a couple of weeks she started to feel less weary, and started to go for short walks, and then longer ones as she felt more at home. She always carried her rifle, and her camera. She would laugh thinking about what her friends from West Los Angeles would think!

On time late in the afternoon she heard the sound of growling, and yipping and moving quietly she had crept up to a sight she would never forget.

There was a big grey almost wolf looking dog caught in a wire snare, and an entire pack of wolves attacking it. The big grey dog fought, and fought, but the others were tearing him to pieces, slash by tearing slash, and the snare was choking him. There was no doubt of the outcome. Though there was tremendous valor in the way the dog fought, he wasn't going to win. But just as obviously, he simply

wasn't going to give up.

She took pictures; and then realized what she was doing. About how the dog was caught between the worst of what was wild, and the worst of what was human. She thought, the wolves were not really vicious, but the trap was.

She thought vicious really was an intention, a decision to inflict pain and she thought that that intention really was personified by that trap! Then she thought, "What am I? That animal is dying; while here I am taking pictures about modern life in the North Country".

Just watching life, as it passed by!

Great photos, what a hypocrite!

Enough of that! She had wondered about carrying a gun, but now saw why. A shot or two in the air with the rifle scattered the pack, and she took the noose from around the animal's neck. Making a travois from some saplings she dragged the unconscious dog back to her cabin.

He was terribly cut up, and had bled a lot, his throat was swollen from his struggles with the wire, but he was breathing and at least alive. He was very close to dead, but alive.

She bathed and bandaged and stitched him up. She did the best she could for him, but the wounds become infected before the night was out, and the dog remained unconscious. He became feverish, and she put a poultice made from various herbal things she had brought, and then hot compresses and salves. As the days past, gradually he improved.

Once she had been putting a salve on the terrible gash in his side and he had awakened and bit her. He had looked terrified.

It was four days before he regained consciousness. He opened his eyes and looked lost and bewildered.

It was strange, that even though he seemed a wild animal, she had no fear of him. It simply felt the right thing to do.

He had opened his eyes and she had talked to him, telling him how she thought he had left, but he had kept coming back. He looked at her like he thought she was the dumbest thing he had ever seen.

He had looked at her hand, and seemed a little surprised, and tried to lift his head, but was too weak.

She had asked if he were hungry, just talking, not expecting an answer and he looked like he was relieved she were finally making some sense.

It seemed to her this was the most meaningful conversation, aside from those with Robert, she had had in years. She knew she was relieved by what she thought was an imaginary dialogue, and it surprised her.

She smiled to herself, and the dog's eyes seemed to soften.

Hum...she thought as she went to get him some bullion.

Over the next week or so he gradually became stronger. He would sleep almost all of the time, and awaken to drink some bullion, and then eat a little stew.

And then he had managed a few steps. He walked to the fire, where he lay down again and slept some more. After that he could go outside. Winter was nearly to an end, and the sun was warm.

His single-mindedness and determination were amazing. He wasn't going to give in or up; she found that distraction from the thoughts of her own life to be very refreshing. It was like they were both healing, and bit by bit they were both getting stronger.

He was walking most of the time now, and she would talk with him as she moved around the house or clearing. He would follow her into the woods, so she kept her trips short.

One time he got up on the table and ate a chop she was going to have for dinner, he was really fast doing it. She had thrown a towel at him in play and had chased him outside and around the cabin. It seemed like he was deliberately staying just barely out of reach, so she faked slipping and falling. He had stopped and come back, almost like he was concerned. She hadn't waited quite long enough before lunging at him, but had almost caught him by the ears. Close, very close, but not close

enough! It seemed they both had laughed for five minutes.

He wouldn't let her touch him though, particularly on the head. He had stopped growling when she tried, but would move away. At first he would go all the way across the room, and then just his head.

He would follow along with her when she photographed things. He didn't understand the camera, and would look at it like "what a silly thing". One night when the moon was full, and the clouds spectacular she had spent the whole night taking pictures. He had just lay there and watched. One dawn there were elk in the clearing. Fawns, Bulls, and Does. He looked at the camera and her like she was the silliest thing he had ever seen. It was like she could see him thinking "use the gun, stupid!"

She had tried to show him the photos, but he wouldn't look.

Late in the spring he was fully well, and he was getting a kind of restlessness about him. He would pace, and pace, and look off into the distance. And one morning he just got up and headed off, like he was going somewhere. She saw him going and went to the door and watched. He got to the edge of the clearing, and stopped, and looked back. She just stood there. She didn't want him to go, but couldn't make him stay. She wanted to call him, but didn't, she wanted to thank him, but didn't know how, she could only watch him. And he had turned around and left. She thought her heart would break, but...well, he was a wild animal.

Late in the afternoon he had come back to the edge of the clearing, and had lain down, like he couldn't make his mind up. She had sat on the sill and watched him. The sun went down, and the moon came up and they had simply watched each other. At one point she had made herself some dinner, and his ears had come up, but he didn't move. All that night they had watched each other, when dawn came he got up and just walked into the house. She had stood aside and let him pass, and not said a word. She didn't think he noticed, but there were tears running down her cheeks.

Early in summer the mud of spring had finally dried, and she could wander much further. Sometimes she would be gone for a couple of days. He would always be there. Sometimes she would hunt, and he seemed to know when she was doing that, and sort of drive the game to her. He was an amazing dog.

She had tried to tell him her name, which seemed to excite him greatly. When she tried to work out a name for him he looked disgusted. She thought he was going to walk off. She thought since he had seemed to come back from the dead he should be called Phoenix or Lazarus, and he looked like he had a feather caught in his throat, Prince really didn't seem to suit him, but Sam did, it had strength, and pride, and was simple and straightforward, like him. And he seemed to be willing to respond to it.

He would still get very restless, particularly at night. Sometimes he would pace and pace, and go outside and come back in and sit down and stand up and sit down. Like he itched, but couldn't scratch it.

She would leave the door open and scratch his ears, which he was finally allowing her to do. She thought it was more because she liked doing it, than he liked having them scratched. She would tell him it was okay, trying to reassure him, that things would be alright, and he would look at her like, "Yeah right!", but he never left again.

They would wander the area, two or three day radiuses, taking pictures of everything. Sometimes they would come across snare traps, and their grisly remains, and she would work to tell the story of what had happened there.

One time Sam had seen a trout in a pool and gone after it. The water was deeper than he thought, and it was hilarious!

One time she had seen a couple of Grizzly Bear cubs playing and had been taking their pictures, and the mother bear had stood up. Nine feet of enraged bear standing not thirty feet away. She was in serious trouble and knew it. As she started backing away, taking pictures all of the way, Sam had charged in and taken on the bear. It was a furious fight. Sam was very fast, but the bear was very strong.

The photos had turned out to be amazing, some of the best she had ever shot.

After she had gotten enough distance away, Sam had also gotten away and they went back to the cabin, where that night she had cared for his wounds.

There was something about how he hadn't hesitated a heartbeat, but dove in to help her, and thinking it about broke a dam inside her and she put her face in the fur of his neck and cried.

She cried for herself, she cried for Robert, she cried for the Kurdish Children, and the “Collaterally damaged”, she cried for the gangsters, and for the peoples whose lives had been such that drugs were a solution in the first place.

She cried because it all had gone on since the beginning of time, and all the farther we had advanced was this: Marriages ended in vicious divorce courts, visually guided missiles were the ultimate foundation for international negotiations. Shock treatments, prefrontal lobotomies, and addictive drugs given to elementary school children were as far as human understanding had progressed.

She could talk to anyplace on the planet any time she wanted, and get there within a day, but if it were serious, or intense, involving lives or money, or egos, what were the chances of real communication working things out?

If it needed agreement, and that “agreement” were based on who had the biggest bomb, literally or figuratively, what chance did any of us have in the first place?

We could make the bomb, but we couldn’t make sanity.

We could make a court, and laws, but we couldn’t make justice!

She cried for it all, and she cried for a long time, and when she was finished, she felt somehow cleaner, and somehow ready to begin again. And Sam had looked at her like “It’s Okay”, and she cried just a little more.

Sam was right; it was at least beginning to be okay.

Sometimes in the afternoon Sam would go off for a while if she were working around the cabin, and that day he had. She had no idea where he went or what he did, he would just be gone, and then be back.

One day he had done that.

An hour or so later she had heard a small sound and looked out thinking it was Sam, but it had been a strange man instead. She was shocked as he was the first person she had seen since arriving, and this one was not much to look at. His clothes were dirty, he was dirty and unshaved, and there was an air about him that was uncomfortable. This man was a predator, but more like the hyenas she had seen in Africa, actually more like the pimps she had seen around Times Square. What a concept: parasitical predators. It definitely took the pride out of being at the

top of a food chain.

And made her clearing a little bit less magical!

It turned out his name was Charlie Hodgkins, and he was the trapper who had been setting the snare traps she had been photographing, and dismantling.

Her photos had been in various magazines in the state and around the country and had people upset at his traps. Some of those people had called their Senators; some of them had called the governor. The Senators had called the Governor, and the Governor had called Fish and Game people. The Fish and Game people had come talking to him. The traps were illegal, he had been poaching. He thought he was lucky that they couldn't prove anything.

Susan thought he had been lucky nobody had put him in one of his traps. She thought "lucky" was a word that didn't apply to people who killed other living things like that. "Lucky" would be a good word for him realizing the pain he had been causing, and changing how he lived.

She wasn't sure what he wanted. The pictures had already run. If she saw anymore traps, she would take more pictures. This wasn't the wild west. Charlie seemed to think that blustering and threatening her would change anything that had happened.

About that time Sam came out of the woods. He had moved quietly up to a few feet from Charlie's back and sat down. He had sat just where the man could see blurry motion, but would have to turn his head to see clearly. Sam just growled quietly. The thing was he looked intent. He had that look wolves get as they are about to hamstring a running elk. He was very focused and intent on the back of Charlie's leg just above the knee.

The thing about wolves is that they could enjoy a hunt!

Well, Charlie seemed more comfortable yelling at her when he thought she were alone than he did with Sam sitting there thinking wolf thoughts. He made a couple of comments and left.

Later that night Sam was sleeping by the fire and he looked so comfortable, Susan thought. Susan was thinking about Charlie, what was he really doing there?

And she looked again at Sam, what a wonderful chancy meeting!  
And he was right. It was going to be okay.

## Jake and Julie

Jake and Julie leaned back against the cab of the truck and pondered the sun setting over the distant Rockies. They were on the top of a small rise perhaps 30 miles south east of Limon, overlooking one of those draws filled with 200 year old Cottonwood trees that were so common in an area that looked absolutely flat from any distance.

They were also covered with mud and laughing.

Julie asked “Do you still remember the first time you saw me?”

Jake answered “yes, it was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and you had just moved down from Greeley”

“What did you think?” “You remember?”

Jake looked at her and smiled “Yes I do, I remember thinking that is the skinniest prettiest girl I ever saw”

And grunted as her elbow dug into his ribs.

“Hold on! I also just knew I would know you for a long, long time. I wanted to know you from the first time I saw you. How about you do you remember the first time you saw me?”

Julie said “no”, and laughed at his expression, and rolled out of reach of the hands that wanted to tickle her.

“I do remember the first time I looked at you”

“Yeah?” he said

“Yeah” she said, “I thought, well now, that would be him”

They both laughed at the game they had played for nearly a decade now.

They were relaxed.

Earlier in the day both had been consumed with thoughts of where had the laughter

gone.

They were young, they were married, they were in love, deeply, they knew what they had, but they didn't know where the laughter had gone.

She had miscarried three years before, and that had nearly broken their hearts. She had never known such darkness.

There had been a rodeo in Limon and he had gone off a horse after a steer, and the and the steer had gone down bad. His arm had broken in three places, and his shoulder dislocated.

That had put him out of work for two months.

Times had been hard. And somehow, they had gotten serious about what had been fun, and the laughter had gone.

They had tried to talk about it but that didn't help, they just didn't know what to do.

Early this afternoon Jake had told her there was some work he had to do on a water tank up here, and would she like to come? And so here they were.

When they had gotten here he was so seriously working on the tank, and saying nothing, she just couldn't stand it any more. She walked over and kicked him in the shins. Hard.

He had yelped in pain, looked at her hard for a quarter second, then his eyes had flashed in that old humor. Without hesitating he picked up a bucket full of water and dumped it on her head.

"You asshole" she shrieked, "You bitch" he started to say as he was rubbing his shin. He didn't get it all the way out before she came for him, and he took off hopping on the leg that didn't hurt.

They had gone for about 10 feet, hit some mud slipped and fell, both of them, her on her stomach and he on his back.

"What did you do that for?" they both had said at the same time, and she picked up a hand full of mud and smeared it in his face.

He then picked up his own handful and plastered her.

Their hands had gotten busy getting each other covered with mud, and their lips touched, and well that had been that for a while.

And they had laughed.

They had laughed before. They had laughed during, and they had laughed when it was over.

There was drying mud in their hair, in their clothes, in their underwear, their socks, they were wet, the sun was setting, and they were still laughing.

“I love you baby” she said, “I love you too Darling, I always will” he said.

She looked slyly at him and said “you should invite me out more often”

He smiled at her and said “that’s one of the reasons I do love you, you really do know what I should do”

They laughed again, they both knew they would be loving each other for a long, long time, and that they would be laughing for at least that long.

## On the Coast

A single crimson rose in a cut crystal vase was on the table; below, the Pacific waves broke against the cliff. The cold north wind whistled through the blow holes in the cliffs face with a Siren's Song. Fishing boats were out past dawn's shadow, working where the coastal shelf dropped off. The gulls did their dance on the wind.

Just past dawn he had stopped on his drive from nowhere to no-place at this rather elegant bed and breakfast because they had advertised a café. But he was surprised.

The omelet with artichoke hearts, thin slices of mildly spicy pork sausage, spinach, and three kinds of cheese had been wonderful, and the French Roast coffee superb.

They were slices of life he hadn't often contacted in the life that was his.

The bread was fresh, sweet and still warm.

As the creases in his face had slowly relaxed; and the smoke and the noise, the drama, the dreams and the struggles, had drifted away, he could breath for a moment.

The passions, the momentary passions, the lovely passions: hollow, empty and past, the lives touched, and past.

He had thought he had finally changed all that.

As always, as with everything, you gave it all of your love, all of your heart, there simply wasn't any other way.

All of my love, he mused, and now a moment, a breath.

He listened to the wind, the Siren's song, the gulls.

Reaching out, caressing the velvet of one of the rose's pedals with the back of his index finger, he paused, "Goodbye" he said softly.

He turned, and there she was at the door.

“Shithead” she said

“Bitch” he replied

“You were driving too fast, I couldn’t catch up” she said.

“Well, it looks like you caught up” he said

“You think I wouldn’t” she asked

“That’s why I stopped, would you like some coffee?” he said.

“I think so, it’s pretty here” she said

“As is everywhere with you” he thought.

## Jacob

Jacob was a dog, he was my dog. We were friends.

Jacob lived for fighting and moments of sexual intrigue. After a long day of fighting and intriguing he would sleep the sleep of the righteous. I wasn't much into fighting, but we had a lot in common. We would often snore the snore of the righteous. (I'm not sure about me, as I was always asleep, but he would sleep on his back with his legs at all angles, and snore when he slept).

David and Joanie had a big white Samoyed named Moon Dog, and Tramp had this beautiful, female named Tommie. (Tramp was this 6'7" pure blooded Hawaiian drummer who was partial to beautiful females). Now, Tommie was a fox (well, not really a fox, fox, a dog. But I could see what both Jacob and Moon Dog saw in her, and it was something to see!)

One time, when Tommie was in heat, I was watching them out across the pasture. There was Moon Dog in front, lord of all he could see, the absolute monarch over the vast, frozen, barren, tundra which lay endless before his eyes (and considering his arrogance, was what he deserved, everybody else was wandering through a flower filled springtime meadow!), then came Tommie, with a Mona Lisa like little smile (she knew that moment really belonged to her), and bringing up the rear was Jacob with his nose up Tommie's butt (he knew what he wanted!).

Every once in a while Moon Dog would look, see Jacob, and come roaring back, and he and Jacob would mix it up for a while. Jacob loved to fight, but Moon Dog had so much hair it would frustrate him. A mouthful of fur! It really was a game to him, he knew what he was after, and he loved to fight. He would fight with a bobcat, just for the sport. He would even go find the cat! After a bit Moon Dog would go back to the front of things and continue gazing at his world of frozen emptiness, Tommie would get back to smiling that smile, and Jacob would stick his nose back up Tommie's butt. It was the funniest thing you ever saw. I laughed until I had to sit down!

And you know what? That litter had most of the puppies looking like Jacob!

What a dog!

## **Life, Love, Art...**

### **Life**

Jimmy sat, pondering his Guinness and the other people on the patio of the bar.

The other night he had had a conversation in that same bar with a songwriter about watching people, the songs came from watching people, watching life. He had said that, well, yes, but you had to get involved in their lives, get into the life of it up to your elbows. To feel the breath and blood of it. Yes, your heart could get bent and dented, but there was real music there. Ultimately, what you gave, you gave, and it wasn't for something back. Well, in his case, he was in it as much for the story as the life. What you got from life, you gave to the song. No risk, no gain.

Now he was leaning back and thinking about the women he had known. There had been some really remarkable women. It had never been about pretty, or boom-boom, it had always been about heart, vision, strength, toughness, talent and competence, and the solutions used to resolve problems. And yes, stubbornness.

It was about their lives.

### **Love**

There was one who couldn't sing, but could fill a room with how she did it, she carried a sword and was nearly the meanest person he had ever known. But she did what she did so well.

She couldn't have children. The last time he had seen her she had called and asked him to come by. She had gone through a windshield, had no scars, but somehow had had a daughter from it all. She wanted him to be the father with her.

Out of the blue, and a couple of years, of all of the people she knew, she wanted him.

That really was something. He would have tried a couple of years earlier, but he simply couldn't now.

People, including him, could get trapped by the choices they had made. It was

interesting. They could always step outside their past, they couldn't leave it, but be responsible for it, and change their lives . It just took courage: To come clean with yourself, and change it.

One was perhaps the most remarkably competent, demanding person he had ever meet. She could, and would stand at the door to Hell and tell the Devil to go screw himself. She would do it in a heartbeat if it needed to be done.

It was a funny thing: on the other hand her dedications were to a concept, she was nearly devoid of involvement in the actual individual "life and breath" humanity that makes up interactions between people.

She, however, was trying to help the people and lives he could only write about. She didn't know that world, like he did, the people. She just knew it could be twisted, and worked to change it. He didn't really know how to bridge between writing about it, and changing it.

## **Art**

There was Gail, whom he had known on the internet and phone. He had felt it kind of embarrassing that he would or could get so involved with someone he had not really met, but he did. Really, it was his life that had gotten so insular that he had been fishing in whatever of life was available. And really, what was the difference between meeting someone on the Internet or in a store, in a church, or in a pub? You needed to learn who they really were.

The communication had been real. He knew that. The emotions real. He had been touched, and knew he had touched.

How she did what she did, the artistry, the sensitivity. The stories, the anguish, the drama, the care, the heart. He was a thirsty man, thirsty for all of the life he could find.

The heart though. . . . He thought perhaps that one viewed ones own heart much more harshly than others with a different perspective. One knew ones own secrets, and condemned oneself for them. Others knew their own secrets, and dealt with them however they choose. There had been a slip in a phone conversation, when he knew he had been dealing with someone considerably older than he had thought. There were inconsistent story details.

There were stories that were totally different than previous stories. There was way

too much drama.

It didn't matter to him though. Really it had never mattered. Through it all there was the heart, the person who was home. He ignored his own questions. He wanted to make it safe enough for her to tell him, he wasn't there to judge, but simply to help.

As it sifted down things got more distant. He never did get the whole story. Eventually he dug up his own confront, looked at his own omissions, and consequent derelictions of his own integrity. He started putting the pieces together in someway that could make sense.

It seemed to him that what she did was generate sympathy over the internet from men, and they would send her gifts, and money. He presumed there was no crime if there had been no request for the gifts. While in one sense it was heartless, in another, she was simply selling dreams, to people that needed them. It was fair trade.

It is a sad song he thought.

And still, there were aspects of truth in her creations, and those creations brilliant.

Anything was possible. It could be that the truth was that, like the rest of us, or himself, she had gone through one of life's really crippling train wrecks, and with creative vision, the help of a set of photos and a plan, had put together something that allowed her to reach into life again.

A stretch, but possible. Virtual, perhaps, but like his own current existence, reaching for life, any life, was the whole point. He simply didn't know. Anything was possible.

Really, he thought, he was not all that different from the "twisted people and lives" he was writing about. Probably worse, because he did know better.

Maybe he should go to work for a newspaper!

As time went on, he continued to pull the strings, and watch how she dealt with people. As it played out it seemed that there was nothing that she said, was true. It was fascinating. Nothing was true, except the heart that made it all work.

What he saw was that she would get into these vindictive vendettas with idiots. Blow them out, then draw them back, and go through it all again.

It was like she was fishing: the lives were real, the bait was not.

Imagination is such a wonderful thing he thought. People really should be, and are, free to be whom they want to be. They do that with their lives everyday anyway. That is really all you do. It really is all you can do.

The life you are living really is your wildest dream. As out of control as it may seem, your life really is your wildest dream.

Outside the box is cool, particularly when done with skill, care and responsibility.

Real pirates sail with the truth!

Maybe some form of justice was being served. He probably saw only the surface. Maybe it was only about money, maybe broken hearts. Again, anything was possible.

It was an odd game.

"Evil really is the intention" he had thought, "the intention to confuse, or make less of others, for whatever reason".

And, really, evil was in his own attitudes, presumptions, willingness to "know better", but not actually "live better".

Brilliance was no excuse.

Not even his own.

Evil was evil whether in wolf's clothing, sheep's clothing, draped in the promise of no clothing at all, or even veiled in sanctimonious words.

Evil is an intention.

He couldn't really help her. It was unavoidably, undeniably, frustratingly, and really entirely, her problem. Just as his own problems were his, alone. He could disagree with her life, love her heart, and all he could do was write about it.

Who wins?

Things did change. It took a while but he had stopped wondering, stopped looking

for the song and started to learn to really give himself to this dance. She started telling him, he started simply to ask. They continued to build one of the more interesting relationships either of them had ever known. They never had done anything with it, they never even had actually met, but they had earned a friendship. He was glad to have known her.

He was curious though, did DaVinci, Monet, Picasso, Modigliani have difficulties with involvement with the lives of their models?

Van Gogh did, he knew that. So did he.

Jimmy sat back, took another sip of his Guinness, and flashed a quizzical half smile at the young people milling, talking, laughing and looking on the patio. "May you live in interesting times" he thought.

He did wish them well.

## Tinkerbelle's Whisper

Dear Tink:

Somebody forwarded this to me:

““Help Wanted” was what the email had said. Although looking back on it, it probably said “Do You Need Help”. Looking back, that is what was true.

It had gone on to say that fall was coming to the east Tennessee mountains, and, for the full beauty of that to be appreciated, in the Zen tradition of the tree falling in the woods, and someone to hear, that beauty needed to be viewed by more than one. It needed to be shared. The hours promised to be long, the demands on paying attention, and communication abilities well beyond what he knew as “the norm”, but the rewards extraordinary.

Tom had been temporarily in a lull of activities, and the thought intrigued him.

Something about this email seemed like his daughter's Fairy Princess Books, or Tinkerbelle's whisper. That, in addition to helping the autumn in Tennessee achieve its full potential of beautiful, perhaps the snows of winter, and the joys of the holidays would be enhanced. Perhaps the spring could unfold with historical quantities of new life. He suspected there was magic involved!

Now, the ad didn't say that. There were absolutely no claims made, there wasn't even a game cleanly defined. There was even a disclaimer at the bottom.

However, Tinkerbelle did seem to be whispering. She had a reputation for being a trickster, but with a clean heart. She just liked to play.

A lot of times it was hard-ball.

He was going to have to take a chance.

He thought he would apply.

Actually the idea made him smile; he thought he would contact a friend he had been getting to know, Gayle, and see what she thought of the whole thing.”

Now, Tink, I don't know what to make of a guy who refers to himself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. And he does go on.

This woman Gayle I think is interesting. What does she do with a guy who refers to himself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person? He actually seems comfortable in asking her. I think she has real promise. We should find out.

But, as this is the first time I have heard of this "Autumn in Tennessee" project, my real question is:

Exactly what have you been up to Tinkerbelle?

Peter

### Tink's Response

Dear Peter:

Untitled.txt I thought you'd never notice! I was growing dim and my wings were starting to droop, waiting for you to notice.

The idea with the forests, and autumn leaves, was, well it was like me. If you don't believe in me, pretty quick I'm not there anymore. You know?

And beauty is better shared!

If nobody immersed themselves in the beauty, every year Autumn would get a bit tamer, and then less snow, so Frosty would get smaller, and the Holidays less festive, and spring a bit less full of life.

Every year a bit more like a TV show. After a while all that would be left would be the TV show, and we both know how imaginative Hollywood producers are. Almost as bad as some of those clowns in Nashville. Somewhat less imaginative than a customs inspector.

What really sparked the idea though, was you. You remember when you had that epiphany about how it wasn't how old you were that made you an adult; it was how much you realized life really was a game. So how much you played it as a game, was how young you were. (I'm sorry I wasn't there, there must have been rainbows all around you) You know, you can't get a whole lot done being serious about it all.

You saw that adults weren't all that different from children, they just thought they were!

Peter, it was brilliant!!! You saw that you could play a really big game!

And I was amazed.

Anyway, I watched, and what do you know, Lake Erie came back to life, and San Francisco Bay. The recidivism rate in prisons in Mexico, Israel, and the Philippines went from 80% to 20%; kids in South Central LA were learning to read. Small oases were springing up in Colorado, romance was blooming in elderly peoples lives. There was even a Nashville Producer starting to write and record the songs again that had him interested in the first place! (That must have been tough!)

It was really neat. Elections, which really are a game of course, haven't quite changed, as they are probably one of the last vestiges of cut-throat criminal games around, but a cancer cure can't be far off.

So I started screwing around with the seasons. It seemed kind of Tinkerbell sized.

What I realized was like that old saying: that beauty was in the eye of the beholder. Consequently, you needed people to behold, and people really don't behold as well by themselves. They get way serious. So I ran that email ad. The response has been great!

Sometimes you want to get involved with them. They are pretty old, but sometimes....

This Tom guy, it was like he was living his life trying to be Mr. Darling. Talk about a bag full of hammers! The guy is a banjo player, for Gods sake!

And you know what, before it's over everyone will win!

You are right about Gayle! I mean get this: she tells Tom he smells like a sugar cookie, which was an amazingly wonderful complement. Knocked Tom over! Flat! On his back! I laughed until tears were running down my cheeks (spoiled my fairy dust). That was the nicest thing he ever had said to him.

This lady tells Tom that, and the fact is that she is the whole bowl, and Tom has been trying to tell her that, and probably she is suspecting that he actually means it. Let's see if he can get her to realize that it's actually true.

Yes the woman is a gem, and certainly we should keep our eye on her.

Personally I want to keep my distance and watch. I think they are going to figure out how to appreciate the autumn this year.

You know what? There are a thousand stories like that. I really am glad you had that epiphany: besides that it saved me the trouble, we got to move Never Never Land here. I was getting kind of bored with Cowboys and Indians, and it wasn't politically correct anyway. I couldn't figure out what we could play.

Turns out to be life!

I'll try to stay in better touch. Really you should have noticed, so I'm not going to apologize for you finding out via an email forward.

Love you forever (obviously)  
Tinkerbelle

And Peter Says:

Dear Tink:

Well, you're right about Cowboys and Indians, it only goes so far.

I didn't think you'd noticed either. (I was turning blue in the face, holding my breath, waiting!).

I'll pay more attention!

Love you too (forever) (obviously)

Peter

## **Unemployed Muse**

Would you, by any chance  
Be an unemployed Muse?

A heart that hungers  
For a song to fill it.

For the truth in a melody  
Be played until it

Dances with  
Her dreams.

Would you be she

Who is searching

For laughter to grow  
From a quiet giggle,

Making her toes twitch  
Making her feet itch

To burst free?

Would you be she?

By any outside chance?

## **In the Center of a Heart**

In the center of a heart  
Would be a calm.  
A place to stand tall

In the center of a dream  
Would be a truth  
Something you can see  
Is worth the struggle,  
The trouble  
To make real.

In the core  
Of a sigh  
Would be a dream  
Would be a heart

Would be the caverns,  
The meadows,  
The snowcapped peaks,  
Distant, with  
The cold, fresh water streams,

Where Trout grow.  
Elk graze,  
Where the wind blows,

And dreams grow strong.

In the calm of the heart  
Would be the place to start.

In the center of the heart,  
To start,  
To build the space,  
To find the strength,  
To stand tall.

## **A Whisper**

A whisper  
A kiss  
A touch

A care  
A breath  
One flower

## **She Gave Him a Garden**

He gave her a garden  
To till.

Through the nights  
Through the rain  
Through the tears

Through the summer  
In the sun  
Until things  
Could grow

He gave her  
All of his love.

She gave him a garden  
To till:  
Her trust

Things did grow.

## **Louisiana Dawn**

I think paragraphs rich, like a Louisiana dawn, with your head on a satin pillow, stretching your toes down into clean sheets, pulling the comforter just a bit higher.

Listening to the world be alive, bull gators roaring, Kudzu stretching across the live oaks, the soft scratching of newly born turtles, scratching their way across the sand, scratching through the odds, scratching towards survival.

Somewhere in the distance: Great Blue Herons, fishing.

All lacing their way through and entwining themselves into your dreams.

As the Eagles dance high, and settle into far distant Cypress trees, you create the world and life, the colors and freedoms, you are awakening into.

## New Years Wish

People speak of lives, and hope.  
People send wishes hollow  
with empty dreams, and acceptable social statements.

Life is lived out on the end of what you think your dreams could be.

But hope they might be.

I would wish for you,  
In this new year,  
to step beyond whatever  
you ever thought possible.

To love, like your life depended upon it, with an abandon,  
like it is your birthright!

And dream, like it is your birthright.

These things are your birthrights.

And to set those dreams free  
to sail the world,  
to sail the world and pillage.

And demand they bring home what you could, and did, hope for.  
Dream for.

What is in your heart,  
and would bring you joy.

Those are your birthrights!

I would, and do, wish for you  
in this new year,  
to grasp, and hold dear,  
everything you ever thought  
was yours.  
In your wildest dreams.

## **A Single Note**

A single note  
hangs  
like a razor's edge  
like a heartbeat.

a single note  
held  
in context,

between the breath  
of now,

and...

## Like Panthers

People, like Panthers move  
through the forest.

Each one searching  
To feed,  
To breathe,  
To grow,  
To survive.

The quiet one,  
Pretending to be a vine.  
A safe haven  
For a tired bird to rest.

Grows fat offering  
The thought of nectar

The bold  
Happy, playful one,  
Simply grabs a bite from the shelf  
And moves on.

The one with spectacles  
Plans meticulously  
Dines periodically  
Continually refining strategies.

One pretending  
One pleading,  
A wounded paw...  
Old with no teeth  
To feast upon offered help.  
One laughing!

Panthers all  
Stalking the forest  
Seeking to survive.

## Sun and Sand

To live in this world of sun and sand  
The glare can blind

The things you see

Tigers feasting on babies  
Under the banyan trees  
It the meadows of spring

While priests dance  
And Doctors sell pills  
That only bury the pain

But not relieve it  
Do nothing  
To change it

Knowing they sell lies,  
Destroy lives  
Kill dreams  
For a profit.

Sun and sand

Innocence traded for a loaf of bread  
Dreams sold  
To beings told  
They were not as beautiful  
Or as free  
As they dare believe  
But know,  
In their hearts  
They are

Some days that is what you see.

You see the beauty of a heart  
Carried in a life  
Lived by a soul  
That no longer sees how beautiful  
They truly are

They just forgot  
And then fight  
Their own memory  
Of their own dream  
Of what they know  
Is true.

Life lived under  
An unforgiving sun  
Wandering in the drifting sand

I can be called a hard man  
Insensitive to the hopes  
Or the needs  
Or the dreams  
Of others

I have been called a lot of things  
True and not  
Most days I would choose  
A side of things  
A way to see  
A way to know  
What you would rather see  
What you do know  
Is true

To hope  
To smile  
To dream  
To reach

To believe

To see  
The truth in yourself.

The honor in  
Your own heart

We both know it is there.

Some days I am  
Simply blinded  
By the sun and sand

Some days  
I am ineffective

And, then,  
Always,  
There is tomorrow.

We are,  
Or can be  
Human  
And alive  
Can hope  
Can dream  
Can learn  
Can grow  
Can build.

Do love

## **The Evolutions of Sorrow**

The evolutions of sorrow:  
There is a dream  
And a doubt  
And at each step, the doubt  
Creates more truth

There is a dream,  
And then a doubt.  
The dreamer suspects his own dream  
And doesn't demand  
That he believe,

That he has to believe  
In the truth of his own dream.  
Believe the truth  
Of his own truth.  
That all of eternity lies  
In that truth.  
In that belief.

It does.  
It really does.

When that truth dies,  
When he just  
Lets it go.  
So the dream dies.  
So does his life  
To that degree.

To the degree he no longer believes.

To the degree he cares less.

The evolution of sorrow

## **Passion**

Passion.  
With a period is a statement  
With a exclamation point  
Is excitement  
With a question mark  
Is a hesitation  
With all of these  
Is your heart.

Passion,  
The truth that you know  
That burns  
That only the future  
Can show

Only realized hopes  
Can grow  
What only your heart  
Can prove to be true

Choice  
It is up to you  
To believe what you want  
To believe  
In you

To believe  
Enough to build  
To be something you can see.

To believe enough in you

And believe should be true  
And make it so.

What would you rather  
Show your children  
Or grandchildren

What their dreams  
Could be  
With enough courage  
To be  
What they knew was true

Or what was  
Simply safe  
Enough  
To call a life.  
Simply safe  
Enough.

What should  
Your legacy be  
Safe enough,

Or safe enough to know  
Your dreams  
Deserve your effort  
Your blood  
Your truth  
Your heart  
Your passion necessary  
To build the future

Passion  
The legacy of your heart  
Your integrity  
Your truth  
Into the future

Your truth  
Is important

## **Dreams Blow Free**

Naked on the bowsprit  
Out past the coastal shelf  
Past the cross currents,  
The confused wind,

The coast line hills,  
Carrying dust of  
Farms, highways,  
Cities,

The dreams of those  
Whose lives are defined there.  
But not there is where  
Your own dreams  
Blow free.

Naked on the bowsprit,  
Out where the long waves  
Roll rich and green,  
And require space unhindered

Beneath  
Stars in a sky  
Which are your stars,  
In your sky.

Naked on the bowsprit  
While the porpoises who dance  
With you in the moonlight  
Dance with you because you came out  
And found where they play,  
And asked if they would  
Be so kind as to dance  
With you tonight,  
In the moonlight,  
Where the long waves roll.

## **In the Twilight**

He sat in the quiet  
of the twilight.  
He watched the young girls  
proudly looking pretty  
fishing

for the true hopes of the young men  
drifting, looking for their futures.

## Where Does Life Dance?

Where does life dance?

Where it is contained?  
Well built?  
Or with the unexpected?

True the well built  
Has it's charm,  
It's purpose.

Not to contain  
But to make possible  
The unexpected.

The wildcard,  
The dream  
Fulfills that purpose  
Makes that purpose

Be alive.

But,  
Really,  
The two dance together.

One alone  
Is bored,  
Or has no home.

## Futures

He recalled reading, or writing, a poem about windows: "...When in the past I don't believe...Great Blue Herons, or diamonds, into dust, or dawn..." "...on cloistered Church walls grows no passion..." "...dances all to the glass..."

"...dances all to the glass..."

Only now the windows were behind him, and they were on the doors to the cabin of the boat he called home.

The wind and mist blew lightly, shifting and swirling into a ball of dancing light around the single bulb at the end of the dock.

He sat.

The boat rocked gently in the quiet waves. The mooring lines creaked, like they were holding a live, almost impatient, very curious beast.

A carrier of imagination, a vehicle of curiosity, more a partner in exploration, wondering "where to now?" and desiring to get on with it.

Through his mind danced the notes and motions of the night's last tune.

They were mixed and pushed as much by the tunes he was beginning to write, as by the moon and waves.

It was all floated by the anticipation of the future being created-the hint of the horizons, new and distant, the thrill of a truly new wind tugging at his collar.

Funny stuff: new life surging both brought out the deeper passions of the old tunes, and kept the patterns, rhythms, even the very notes of the new, constantly changing, shifting, searching for the form that would ring true and would reflect the context of this period of time; which when completed, would soon enough turn into "old tunes".

Fascinating: that fascination had both infinite variegations, and focus.

A gull landed on a piling, then another, the dog shifted, and snored, the wind had that coastal smell that had been forever part of his heart.

The moon, full, yet invisible above the misty clouds, pushing enough light to watch the waves.

Amazed.

Out on the edge of where light ended a fish jumped, or perhaps a Heron landed, and the ripples spread.

## Remarkable Sins

Remarkable sins  
What would a sin be?

Knowingly pursuing  
Something you know is wrong?  
Or untrue?  
For both of you.

What about when  
Two dreams collide  
Carried in lives  
That mismatch  
But between hearts  
That somehow are one?

What about  
When both dreamers know  
The differences  
And their hearts can grow

And their wounds can heal  
And they can once again  
Reach into their own worlds

With a heart that is whole.

Carry on their own loads  
And life  
Knowing they have been loved.

Remarkable sins.

## **Alone, In the Moonlight**

Walking alone in the moonlight, the stars high and crisp in the winter's night, the full moon floating like his heart.

Looking across the golf course the day's snow fresh with a crown of ice from the evenings cold, sparkling.

There along the side of the path was a bouquet.

The flowers fresh, and pale blue, and yellow and red

Blushed with the breath of hope, dreams just as they were born

In lovers hearts.

A bouquet of flowers, lying beside a bench half under a winter bare bush, itself covered with fresh snow.

He picked them up, and slipped them under his arm,

And continued on his way.

Ah Nashville on a cold winter's night did have its magic.

## Like a Tiger

Like a tiger in a meadow  
He walks like a lamb

When hungry  
He drinks the blood  
Of lambs,

When tired,  
He sleeps.

When wanting to smell the spring  
He walks like a lamb  
And believes it.

It does surprise him  
At times when drinking:  
He worries about tigers.

## **Your Mind on Something Else**

I would love  
To talk with you,  
But you seem to have your mind  
On something else.

Which is cool.

Now,  
Isn't that  
The dance?

Your mind  
Or mine  
On something else  
Sometimes.

When we dance  
Well,  
Then the time is  
So pure.

The whispers  
The partial thoughts  
Work.

It is cool.

Even like now,  
With your mind on  
something else.

## People Dream

You know, people sing songs, and dream dreams, and in the press of the day to day of living their songs continue to be sung, and dreams continue to be dreamt.

Or not.

All of that is contingent on the strength of their song, and how they deal with their life.

You can see them in stores, or on the street. You can see them shopping for new cars, or trying on shoes. You can see it in the way they smile, or talk with each other. You can see it in the way they look at a sunset.

Do they dream?

Do their dreams have happy endings?

Is their life a battleground, littered with adversaries who were other people they thought were “the enemy”, or are their struggles with those aspects of life they could effectively learn to control and handle, which were based in their own concept of living?

You can see it, if you look. You can even see it in yourself.

## My Muse

Let me tell you about my muse.

I've never actually meet her, I've seen her heel disappearing into the fog, or glimpsed her skirt swishing around a corner. She has kissed my fingers, but never held my hand.

I've seen where she's been in an old couple dancing in the middle of Iowa, he with grey hair, and a pot belly, and shiny boots, and her with grey hair and a beautiful dress, dancing with all the intrigue and passion of their first date, or in teenagers flirting in a Missouri truck stop at 2 AM. I've seen her in the eyes of a nine year old girl who just finished a course on how to study, and she is no longer afraid of her teacher, as she knows what to ask. Or in the relief of someone who has just realized and made known some long held, known or forgotten secret, large or small. Or a marriage saved. Presents piled high on the shelf at the back window of cars on the interstate at Christmas time. An infant's trust or the laugh of a four year old.

My muse lives in the nature of a real communication, not so much the words, but the heart of it, what makes the words make sense. That is home, where there are flowers on the mantel, and the beer is cold.

She has this interesting combination of infinite patience and a hair trigger.

She wants me to play like the tune is new, I am not sure where it goes, and can't wait to find out; even if I wrote it years ago. She wants it alive now.

Kind of like a married couples' kiss should be: a fascinating thing.

## Real Pirates

Real Pirates sail with the truth

They sail into the wind with the moon in their teeth, and the sheets drawn tight, through the hurricanes and doldrums, simply because they are there.

They are out on the bowsprit with the stars in their eyes.

They sail with or without crews, and they wander the seas because they were born there.

Real Pirates, real Pirates.

Real Pirates love simply because to love is to give, and to care.

Real Pirates do everything with everything they have.

After a while they forget they need love too.

After a while they don't expect anymore anyone on the bowsprit with them.

They be Pirates, they be cause to hide your daughters and bury your gold, they be pirates.

Real Pirates, started off in knickers and playing catch with their fathers on a summer day in the park, and learned to wonder what girl was going to teach them to dance.

They started off to teach history, and learned it was their job to make it.

And that their heart sang with the life of it, and the mainland fell far behind.  
And that was the cost of it.

Real Pirates sail with the truth, and by the time it is time to pay the piper, all they have is their blood.

Children wonder about real Pirates, women may sigh.

They may all glance at the Icon, and wonder about the stories.

That's what real Pirates do.

Real Pirates may learn not to expect, but never forget  
they want someone out on that bowsprit too.

Real Pirates sail with the truth,  
and sometimes the truth is a hard line.  
Even for them.

## **An Intimate Evening**

They simply sat. Really it was very quiet. An aspiring boyfriend slept at the end of the couch. Her five year old son slept next her. Her ten year old daughter slept in her bed. It was quiet.

They spoke paragraphs deep in single words, pauses, hesitations, and that rich silence. He massaged her feet, and reached out to caress her cheek with his thumb, not even thinking about it.

She had called earlier. Out of the blue a voice was playing with him on the phone. Teasing, wondering if he would remember who it belonged to. It took a while. He had been noncommittal, talking, finally: “who is this?”, and it was the laugh, and he knew.

Somehow home, it was sideways, crossways and somehow home.

Not to wonder, not to want, simply to have that moment as it's own, as friends. Somehow they were home. In his life it had been awhile, in her's too.

Always, always, the years and just as always the touch of hearts. As in that first moment when they simply knew they were very old, very dear friends and had laughed. And it did continue, every time, even with time apart.

The years, adventures, wars won and lost, each in their own lives. Contact lost, and now they sat and smiled quietly. They didn't know how, but they did know.

At the door they had hugged, she had kissed his cheek, he her neck. He hadn't wanted to let go quite yet. She had held him a bit longer. They had made a couple of sketchy plans for the next few days. He had thought to find a banjo for her son, rescheduled his coming days, and driven off.

Into the night amazed.

“She doesn't have a clue what a remarkable woman she is” he mused. Then he laughed as he realized he didn't often see himself through her eyes either.

They were friends.

## **A Solder, in an Old Battle**

There is this story forming of a solder in an old war, fighting, thinking of his family, tired, sweat and dust in his eyes, working with his sword, his muscles aching, and tired. Half blind, half dead with exhaustion. The smell of the dust and the blood, the cries of men looking at their dismembered limbs laying on the ground, the howls of agony of dying men watching their own blood flow into the sand and rocks, knowing nothing they had done here, or anywhere, would ever help anything to grow on this, their final killing ground.

Wondering about his wife. She gave him reason to fight. He had to walk away from this battle to go home, so he carried on.

Bodies fell that did not want to go home as much as he did.

It was a long time ago, Mesopotamia continued to be a civilization for a while. One would presume he did walk away, walked all the way home, and helped her raise their children. They smiled and the civilization prospered.

I wonder if he called her Dear Heart. I wonder how long they held each other after the years apart, and true. I wonder how long they looked into each others eyes, and spent quiet days growing used to each others presence in the spaces they had learned to defend as their own.

I wonder about the evenings, the wine and the quiet guarded talk as they both learned to find their way through to, and earn again, the hearts they had dreamed of. The truth they both had held dear.

I do wonder about all of that, I do know that Mesopotamia did continue as a civilization, for a while longer.

I also do know why he fought, why he survived, and why he made his way home, and then earned it again.

I have no doubts about those things.

## Dear Dear Heart

Dear Dear Heart:

What a fascinating life we live. Carried by vehicles of our own creations; consumed by dreams of our own construction; fueled by our own desires.

Traveling a road mapped by our own truths, guided by a star that leads and wanders, and leads, guides us through the swamps of our nightmares and fears, toward, always forward, always reaching, for our wildest dreams.

I have known my muse my entire adult life. I wondered who she was for most of this lifetime prior to our actual introduction.

An interesting combination of infinite patience, and a hair trigger, she has never lied to me, never deceived me, and never hesitated to let me know her extreme displeasure if I doubted her direction. Even with a glance, or a momentary hesitation.

She also has never said it would be easy.

She has this beguiling, totally enthralling, amazing smile when I get it right.

She does have my absolute dedication.

From what I know of you, you have met her brother.

We both have ended up out of gas on the other side of Jupiter, simply following directions.

With our queries to said impetuous muse answered with a shrug and a very true “I never said I was always right”, we have been, at times left to our own devices as to how to get home.

Wherever that may be.

We have paid our taxes, licked our wounds, and carried it on from there.

How is that for a sketch of your life?

A wild guess based on my own autobiography and what I know of you.

Close enough for Jazz?

Anyway, I think all I am trying to say is tear it up kid. Stay honest, and burn the bridges.

I got your back.

All of My Love  
Me