**Digging a Hole to**

**Bury the Past, and Finding**

**Some Gems in the Dirt**

**(A Collection of ACOA poems)**

**By T W Gilbert**

**Introduction**

This book of poetry, “Digging a Hole to Bury the Past, and Finding Some Gems in the Dirt,” is a compilation of ACOA poems written over a period from 1987 to now. Some of them are titled, being older poems written years ago. Most of the recent poems are untitled. Many of the poems are unformed (unrhymed and non-metrically influenced, sort of like prose). A few are Haikus, some are Villanelles, some are Shakespearean sonnets,  but most of them are  “Glaefke Sonnets” (a form I invented that combines Shakespearean sonnets with 5-stanza ballad stanzas; Shakespearean sonnets are in “iambic pentameter”, which means ten syllables per line, in 14 lines, with a rhyme scheme of ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG; the Glaefke sonnet also has this form, but includes rhymes every 14th syllable also, as well as every tenth syllable).  The purpose of this book here was to describe the ACOA personal investigative and transformative process, which really is a lifetime struggle with growth and illumination. If you have any comments, questions, suggestions, and/or criticisms you may reach out and communicate them. This is a necessary community of fellow travelers. Blessings, Tom G.

**Dedication**

To Meredith Ellis, Patricia Vidil, Jeffrey Gilbert, and Harriet Whitcomb, for knowing and experiencing the unimaginable

To Emma Bowler and Linda Schiller-Hanna for love and support and meticulous editing and fun and sharing

To Jason, John, Melissa, Hester, Dylan, and Gwydion, for living with the inherited traumas

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To all the Healing Hearts ACOA members and participants

And to all ACOAs everywhere in the world.

**Digging a Hole to
Bury the Past, and Finding
Some Gems in the Dirt**

I’m sharing and presenting and I’m scared

like nothing sane. I’m worried that my words

offend in ways I can’t explain. What’s spared

may not be worth a lot and for the birds

or worse. But if I share what’s really true

my words may seem adverse. We all do walk

a fine line here describing pasts askew.

Our pains may act as triggers and our talk

may be taboo. Our healing can be pain-

ful and our helping may seem rough. But heal-

ing’s just as painful as the wounds so plain-

ly tough. Our remedies aren’t kind, but real,

we need all hands that serve. We all deserve

what’s love and light, but starting takes some nerve.

**Broken Through**

We manifest our unseen forces tapped

from hidden spheres, while holding onto lights

with eyes that gaze through blesséd years. Life’s wrapped

in wondrous glories that evolve through frights

and charms. We’ve lived through wretched horror states,

survived fierce false alarms. But what we share

this time around reveals our cancelled fates:

we’ve found that love is here and now; it’s where

God celebrates. These treasures that we dai-

ly know amaze us as we love. The parts

we play in wonderland reveal what’s way

above: arising and ascending hearts

that bring forth joy and peace; like flying geese

in cloudless skies where wonders never cease.

Dysfunction ruts are timeless Hells that groove

each move we make, for routine lines and lives

we know predict each new mistake. We prove

that we are ACA when fear deprives

us all, of peace and health and simple love,

due much to alcohol, this hellish drink,

that seems so bland, that needs a mindful shove,

thrown far away with all its train: that brink

that we’re free of. We’ve fallen down so man-

y times, we know now how to stand. We care

for us, and those like us, especially when

we’re banned. We’re on the outside looking where

we hope to sometime be: where we will see

our lives made whole, that we will be set free.

I vacillate between my selves, I think

I know just why. Sometimes I need to be

adult, sometimes I need to cry. I stink

at knowing what to do. I don’t know free

from safe. The walls that I’ve constructed may

be good, but then they strafe. Protections hurt,

as well as hug, they do so, it’s their way,

apart from me, of me, with me pervert-

ing what I say. My words do not reflect

my feelings or my thoughts within. I don’t

know how to be alone, or now connect

with kin. I fear my fear, but say I won’t,

but now it’s time to share. But do I dare

reveal my mess when lost ‘tween here and there?

**The Seminar**

“Teach me,” I say to the wall, “how you can

hold up more than your share, or more than I’d

care to.” It has the art of a one man

band down pat, for all to hear, and the pride

to go with it. “Teach me,” I say to the

wall, “how I can see through you with one eye

closed, or at least with one hand clasped to a

book, a pen, or a pair of shoes.” I try

to keep up with the line of sun light now

bent on the wall as it turns the house to

face me. “Teach me,” I say to the wall, “how

you bounce thoughts off the air so they can chew

the fat on their own, stand with the rest of

us to mix truth with tacks and holes with love.”

We gather round a table meal to seek

what brought us here. As friends we deeply hold

each other in kind ways so dear. Though bleak

the pasts we’ve come from, we now share our gold-

en hearts, that lend support and wisdom, for

we’ve learned the healing arts. For growing and

succeeding help us all with being more,

than ever we envisioned, when what’s planned

grows from before. We can’t forget where we’ve

come from; that would be such a crime. But each

of us is going forward though we grieve

lost time. It helps that we can share and teach

each other of our lives; but what now drives

us to go on is that God’s wisdom thrives.

There comes a time when love prevails, when all

that is just fits, when deeds and truths and bless-

ings flow with what God now permits. The call-

ing out for workings planned comes through each guess-

ing soul, who follows inner light direc-

tives towards a peaceful goal, where all who strive

in righteous pain, though collared by the neck,

know *Time* is ripe for freedom’s dream alive

with all who trek, this earthly plane, now hand

in hand with those who need a lift. For you

and me this journey here is but a grand

old gift, that we are simply living through;

it’s plain we’re meant to be, with all who see

that tunnel light as inner fortunes free.

I am awake, it’s early now, my fears

are stationed here. I feel that my endeav-

ors are now making things unclear. This year’s

unfoldings are so stressed, they seem to nev-

er end. My tasks are Herculean and

aren’t easy to defend. I must contin-

ue onward doing what my works demand;

this course is set, amidst regret, within

life’s shifting sand. I don’t know how to mus-

ter strength to finish what’s been planned. It’s like

I’m just an instrument in someone’s trus-

ty hand. I’m not one to go out on strike,

was never in my cards, while life discards

those weary into premature graveyards.

My confidence is waning and I don’t

know how to rest. My work is more than I

can bear, I’m clearly one obsessed. I won’t

consider quitting even though I cry

in pain. This solitude of knowing keeps

me going to obtain some gifts that I

may share with some, while most of this world sleeps.

Thank God I have you by my side; you’re why

my heart now weeps, with joy that’s everlast-

ing, thank you for your presence dear. You’re all

that I will ever need as we move past

this fear. As long as you are with me call-

ing out what things we’ll need, it is agreed

we’ll triumph and in all things we’ll succeed.

**Epigram**

If stress were food,

we’d never go hungry.

**Private Musings**

In the right frame of mind, one sees the plan

of God in the flight of a bee, the curl

of a shave of wood, the wounds of a man,

the knots in a rug. The mind is a whirl

of horse fluff that, if glued to a lamp shade

on a good drunk night out, sees the “All is

All,” with the glee of a self when it’s made

the big loop and stares at its own big “whiz

of a was.” The fates keep their own bits of

red and green and blue glass that turn to show

off new forms and shapes, jags and shards. I love

to watch it all fall down; but I don’t know

how to nudge death next to me, wake it up

so it can swill the dregs in its own cup.

These hurricanes within us all leave wreck-

age few can see. And Jim Cantore won’t

explain directions we should flee. This trek

of pain in silence mode, which grows, I don’t

know why, provides few easy answers while

we struggle, scream, and cry. We drift along

like corks at sea through waves and storms that trial,

experiencing unknown fears that wrong

us as we smile, pretending we are fine

and safe, while inside we subsist. The dai-

ly ups and downs more often just malign

and twist, considerations that we pray

will help begin to heal, our lives that reel

through pains and hopes, though prospects seem unreal.

**The Soul of Service**

I hope that we can move the world and share

our love with all, and fix the hurt and pain

we see behind earth’s growing wall. To bear

the weight of light and work is why we deign

to stay. We know from our experience

that sharing love’s the way. The lessons that

earth’s trials bring may often seem intense.

But when life knocks us down and out and flat

within God’s fence, it then behooves those still

down here to roll up sleeves and serve, to take

the steps to help relieve all pains with skill

and verve. There is no other reason shak-

ing loose for why we’re here. It’s really clear

that love’s the goal and path in life’s career.

Our loneliness is brutal, though it’s com-

mon as a cold, that hits when least expec-

ted when we’re down and out and old, it dom-

inates like clockwork as we blindly trek

towards death, which waits without exception for

that slowly ended breath. Who knew this life

was feeble for exacting such a score,

of loss and grief and endless hurt, and strife

that’s set for more? It wasn’t in the fine

print or expressed in nursery schools

where teach-

ers helped to nurture all us smiling shin-

ing fools. We weren’t forewarned in any speech

by mother, father, sage, that with old age

comes loneliness, but we can burn that page!

**Conversation with My Co-dependent Self**

“I know the taste of dust this time: it’s like

all ashes burnt. It teaches what may nev-

er happen, or those dreams that weren’t: that strike

from Fates who measure all, and ply that sev-

ered string: a face card from within that sleeve,

a barb with luscious sting.” “There’s time for all

to play a hand, so please don’t ever leave.

You must have known this game won’t end, your call

is to unweave: the messages this game

has taught, the lessons here conveyed; what are

those things that you have learned, can you now name

what’s played?” “I’ll try real hard to strive for par,

and cope with hands you’ve dealt. I’ve always knelt

and kissed Fate’s ring; Fate needs the love I’ve felt.”

**Mother**

S is for the silence that you gave me.

H is for your hush that meant so much.

H is for the humor you forbade me.

H is for your holographic touch.

H is for the hook that couldn’t save me.

H is for your hand-outs in the clutch.

H is for the half-wit that you made me.

H is for your hare kari crutch.

All life is here, not fair nor fowl, but just

what we all need. We should not be too hast-

y when fixed choices intercede. What must

seem hard to understand, when all life’s based

on trust, is when unwelcomed chaos makes

one’s dreams turn into dust. Such problems come

when learnings are a need to fix mistakes.

We plan and plan while knowing zilch: the sum

of trialed aches. But rainbows come when rain

drops end, and blessings when things fail. We should

be grateful for life’s trials that sustain

this trail. All hopes and dreams are understood

when flow of life is prized. What’s realized

through destinies are truths that come disguised.

I’m torn between my past and now, for work

compels my dreams, and stands as door to fu-

ture paths, yet holds what links extremes. Berserk

as life presents itself it offers few

real keys, or signs to indicate what roads

are safe or drive disease. The laughter hid-

den in the dark surrounding hand held codes,

evokes a blind malevolence: what’s bid

when life implodes, where pox evolves from pax

in time, and gross evolves from grace. We tee-

ter in these coaster carts upon these tracks

that race, around around in apogee,

centrifugal and lost, while we’ve been tossed

to Hell and back not knowing of the cost.

**Observatory**

I turn my head back to look at the rose

clouds as I drive home from work. I say to

my friends that I live for such sights, but those

who know me know that I work to live through

times when I state I am too old for a

child’s mind that will not take things one at a

time, or day to day, as if I fear the

day I might be hit head on and miss the

“I don’t know whats.” I keep it in mind that

each break of “stop and look at it all” has

its place like the flu or a late charge at

the bank. I should not be caught off guard, as

if my need for black and blue stained clouds that

bleed don’t let me know I’m not where it’s at.

**A Marriage Of Hellish Conditions**

I fight not to bite

my nails, peel

cuticles with teeth that mutter

peppercorn words.

I still don’t know

if I am to eat

or be eaten.

I search the wrappings

of my youth for lost cards –

words to bend into pleasures,

my what-ifs used

with the frequency

of hay-fever tissues.

I used to fall in love

with answers my mind gave me

to questions my parents

never asked.

In the reflections of my past,

I ask them now, study

reasons behind them:

butterscotch tears on vanilla cheeks.

I choose to live with vagabonds and those
so out of sorts: the lame, the lost, the des-
titute who fail to find supports. Who knows
what we encounter as we trek this bless-

éd earth, through trials and conundrums that
can test our every worth. Life often takes,
when we have zilch, and pins us to its mat,
while playing ref and audience, it breaks

us down and flat. Our faith and karma ques-
tioned, what the hell must we have done? We don’t
have much to go on when our proof is less
than none. Experience keeps rolling, won’t

time ever lift its fist, as we’re the grist
in heaven’s mill, though clearly we persist?

We go through life a wandering for ev-

er and a day, without a clue of me

and you or what we’d like to say. We nev-

er know where we’ve come from or

what our sea

will bring. We live alone, in flesh and bone,

and fears to which we cling. We strive to know

why we are here, on earth where we’ve been thrown,

while giving, taking, and mistaking, tow-

ing all we’ve sewn. We live with no direc-

tions, though we hope and dream and smile, and pray

we make it through to peace, beyond life’s wreck,

in style. If we could just hold hands this day,

perhaps to share what’s here, it would appear

we’ve found what’s real, before we disappear.

**“Another Piece, Please.”**

During my everyday

two and a half mile run,

on a Saturday morning,

Mother’s Day weekend,

I pass a Dairy Queen

billboard that reads,

“Remember Mom

with a D.Q. cake,”

but from where I live,

I don’t think I could

throw it that far.

**Time Of The Year**

Holiday hangnails,

long enough to bleed,

too short to clip,

burn from eggnog humor.

We decorate the family tree,

recounting last year’s

communal clutchings:

hurts and slights in practiced wrap.

Everyone gets at least one.

And we stretch winter shadows

around each hug and kiss,

exchanging numbers for

next year.

**Neighborhood Watch**

I want to protect reality,

but I don’t know

where to get

the fenceposts.

Bullying is not a game, and hurts all

youths worth bossing. It’s like stomping flowers,

pulling wings off flies, and causing to sprawl,

helpless kids, without hope, as if powers

of being were compromised for the sake

of jokes, brutality, and injustice.

And there is no consolation for tak-

ing hits, those favored punching bags, like us,

who cannot fake how we feel, beaten, laughed

at, scorned, isolated, silenced, wishing

for peace, love, and smiles, but given the shaft,

and fenced in a box of gloom, while fishing

for any reprieve, lost, while being bossed,

as if we were just life’s trash that’s been tossed.

**Bird Brains**

When people began

putting whisky in the bird baths,

male cuckoos began

to hunt like falcons.

They became so aggressive

they began to eat their young –

a habit they couldn’t

get out of.

Cuckoo mothers

became so desperate

they began to lay eggs

in other birds’ nests –

a habit they couldn’t

get out of.

Surrogate parents would

allow the cuckoos to hatch,

to de-nest their own babies

(for some reason),

and then raise them

to hunt or lay eggs

in unguarded nests.

During this time,

flying south was just

a matter of choice.

What crime did we commit so young that served

us into Hell? What karma that we don’t

remember cast this awful spell? Deserved

or not what Godly love makes scars that won’t

undo? The constant pains of memory

aren’t legal if we sue. And crying helps

like icy sidewalks, anger when we’re three, abandonment in neighbors’ homes, when yelps

from belts were free. The chaos was the plan

it seemed, like raked leaves in the Fall, like meal

time during holidays when truths could ban

us all, from sharing, caring, or reveal-

ing life we couldn’t face, for each disgrace

that punched our thoughts was love that worked like Mace.

**Cleaning House**

My parents forgot to teach me

the seriousness of

protecting fragile things.

So when I grew up anyway,

I used the broom and dust-pan

they’d left me

to try to sweep up the shards

of my laughter.

Mythologies and lies pervade where al-

cohol is king. Miasma stew and plas-

ma goo, as walls, forever sting. Real-

ities, kaleidoscopic, keep the cas-

ualty, of life forever spinning in

a gloom propensity. We wake into

a dream where all our thoughts fail to begin,

unraveling where we’ve come from: How do

we grow through sin? What choices were we born

with? Who designed this swamp called home? Is this instruction for the blind? Or tests from worn

genome? Who built this blessed maze of bliss,

this wretched house of cards, where heaven’s guards

like classroom angels test our best regards?

**Ballad Stanza Make Believe Sonnet**

I try to think that I’m the last, that I

won’t bash my kid, that what I’ve stopped will end

for good, that lies will not be hid. I try

to think my mom and dad will one day send

a card, and tell us that the blame is shared,

the void we left is hard. But genes that show

a trait for harm are passed when folks are paired;

the lives they’ve touched with pain and dread all know

their kids are scared. Our hands and hearts are marred

from pasts too quick to judge with blame. We act

too fast from fear of “truth” when we were scarred

with shame. We know too well our lives are fact,

that change is like a curse; our need to nurse

the lives we know is what makes love seem worse.

I face transitions with a pause, I’m not

sure of my feet. My life of chaos fits

my fears, perhaps I should retreat. My lot

in life’s not peaceful now, though plans show bits

of hope. All change is like a clicking clock,

so slow it’s hard to cope. I’ve never had

what’s stable ground, where footing’s like a rock;

I think my path’s unsolvable and mad

like keyless lock. The trip I’m on is out

of hand, but maybe right for me. I’m left

with no directions, but I now can shout,

“I’m free,” to know I stand alone bereft

of counsel from my mind, that’s so unkind

and treacherous and thinks I’m better blind.

I know of nothing else while here, I’m blind

to healing means. My efforts are redic-

ulous, like Jack’s few magic beans. I find

this solitary work just keeps me sick

alone, a method to self isolate

with walls that are my own. Protection keeps

me safe, unhassled, hiding what’s not great,

observing what’s around me, while life heaps

upon my plate. My blessings and my tri-

als are a stew of seamless goo. I don’t

know which are benefits, or what’s a lie

or true. I’m timid, lost, confused, life won’t

provide an easy fix. And in this mix

of blathering, I’ve plum run out of tricks.

Like loss and grief this healing is a nev-

er ending space, in which we live and strive

and grow; it’s weirdness we all face. The clev-

erness of stepping stones, so slippery, live,

and crazed, on which we balance what we are,

while trudging hallways mazed, are worth the ef-

forts we put forth, to reach that inner star.

Our loser egos ruling here seem deaf

to what’s afar, what’s hidden deep within

our hearts, that light divine and whole. It’s there

we strive to just become that part akin

God’s Soul. Returning to our Source, that ver-

y stillness, Being free, a doorless key

that’s love and light and perfect for what’s me.

**Earth Exhibit**

This glass jar with no seams, no lid, will show

no key to help us solve this locked cage. There’s

no sign to free us from what we don’t know

of this cell, on this stage, where the gods sow

seeds for us to think, as if one who shares

this glass jar with no seams, no lid, will show

us a way out, or lead us as we flow

on down through this closed maze. The glass wall bears

no sign to free us from what we don’t know

of where we have been or where we should go,

as if we could get out. But no one cares.

This glass jar with no seams, no lid, will show

us off to the gods, as if we were so

much crap on T.V., a sit com that blares

no sign to free us from what we don’t know

of our selves, the best kept lies we can throw

at the walls we call home. But no one dares.

This glass jar with no seams, no lid, will show

no sign to free us from what we don’t know.

I spend my time looking for answers. It

is like seeking out water stations on

a marathon race. I’m peeking through shit

that does not end; the tedium’s not gone

away. What I’ve tried to do is of no

consequence to this day. My dreams are the

same. Survival I cannot ignore, though

my fears and longings trade places in a

waltz that’s pure show. I am not able to

detach my true inner self from the mess

of my past, my pains, my losses, all glue

and scum. I remain hidden, my address

is walking through life, scared, nonsense squared,

as if my lame choices were best impaired.

Do I embrace or flee my past? How pain-

ful is each course? Which path should I pursue,

right now, which one the least remorse? The drain

of trials I’ve lived through continue through

each day, rehashing thoughts, events, and feel-

ings, why must hardships stay? I do suppose

my triggers are imagined pasts unreal;

no longer have they any power; ros-

es under heel, where love we longed for nev-

er came, where caring never was, where hurt

came daily when we longed for peace: that sev-

ered buzz, where alcohol and drugs were dirt

that replaced love with fear, but they’re not near

me anymore, I’m working love’s career.

**First Step**

To realize I have no control is not

an easy task. I might as well be blind-

ed by this frightful facial mask. I’ve got

responsibilities and think my mind

directs all actions and life’s choices that

are causes and effects. “Not so,” say mys-

tics versed in lore, attuned to where God’s at.

“We’re puppets all on what’s a stage, dismiss-

ing life’s format. Although we play at know-

ing what this life is all about. We sel-

dom are aware that life’s a realm of grow-

ing doubt. We all are just observers dwell-

ing here for just a wink, a simple blink

in time, between what’s Hell’s and Heaven’s brink.”

**Children’s Reality Death Poem**

The itsy bitsy spider

crawled up the water spout

Down came a hand

and rubbed the spider out.

Out came the sun
and dried up what remained.

And the itsy bitsy spider

will never climb again.

The hurts we inflict, the hurts we endure,

are all the same. When love is not under-

stood, then hate is what’s used to blame, assur-

ing us that our choices were right, and blur-

ring sight of alternatives. Whether we

are abusing what’s right or just abused,

if we don’t act with love we’ll never see

an end to cycles, and remain confused

with our debris. To extricate from the

mess that goes on and on is just to re-

main still and calm and surely know that a

time must come when this has to stop, to free

us from all the madness, and all the stress

of pain and grief. We deserve nothing less.

The hurts we inflict, the hurts we endure:

results are just. We deserve what we get.

It’s that simple, karma’s a must, a sure

bet, a way the fates control balance, set

in stone.  We do and act as we think best.

There are ways to atone. But they’re not pop-

ular, or easy. We give in to test

what we think will serve us, with ways to stop

from being blessed. Advice is seldom tak-

en, as we steer our own courses, through hell

and disadvantage, as if we could break

forces far out of our control. We sell

our prayers as offered goods, in neighborhoods

where we think our shouldn’ts might become shoulds.

The hurts we inflict, the hurts we endure;

we are children. We play games. We are friends

with friends. We want to help. And when secur-

ing smiles, we ask for help. So who pretends

to love or help? Why must we ask? We can’t

know how or why. Above us are things lke

schools and teachers and parents, who just rant

about doing and doing. If we strike

out or just plant our feet to protest we

get yelled at, or hit, or timed out. It’s not

fun or happy or good. Who listens? See

the shouting silence, facing wall’s spot

by ourselves in wonder: what we’re under,

when those who watch are lightning and thunder.

**Haiku**

Words filtered before

they can be formed into sounds:

subconscious fossils

The hurts we inflict, the hurts we endure;

already there, but you don’t know it. Nei-

ther do I. Maybe we don’t care, ensur-

ing why and how we stay right here, rely-

ing on hope. Don’t let life’s pains distract you

from what seems like it’s gone. It never left.

Your goal (all goals) are within you. Cut through

yourself. You’re the key (Chi) to what’s bereft.

And find what’s new. Replace chaos with peace,

hell with calm, danger with joy. Will is the

answer to beginning the path where ceas-

ings still. Just sing and play and dance for a

while, until peace descends, and never ends,

and all the past wounding learns as it mends.

**And We’re So Proud**

As a child

I was taught

to build bridges

by parents who spanned cables

with twisted sterling lies.

They knew

not to set

their examples in concrete.

So I learned to support my arches

by walking

across

myself.

Just imagine

what a fear of heights

could have done

for me.

A highly dysfunctional family: love

was the fulcrum upon which the teeter

totter swung. Both of my selves, from hells of

hells, are on each side of this two seater,

going up and down in tandem. Movement

is constant; and throwing thoughts and fears and

drama around makes seeking peace absent.

I’m the balance, when there is none. I stand

as conveniently still in motion as

I can, observing how my world can be

both a blessing and a curse, for it has

a pearled sense of sand and pressure, from sea

and shell, from lifetimes blessed, from too much stressed,

the joy and pain of untold heartbreak pressed.

**Entropy**

I look toward a jarred past of still born dreams,

shelved with friends and jobs like last week’s top ten

hits, and shake up the blue glass snow that seems

to share the cloned space of my desk, my pen,

my shoes, to see if sunk dust can drift down

to a changed scene. Leaves don’t need help to learn

how to fall, or to fade from red to brown.

As with a dog’s grace, rain slate smooth, I turn

my mind round and round to rest first growth fears

in a curled nap by a spot where the sun

hits for now, mark the place where thoughts, in tiers

and rows, meet stats that state, “It’s all been done.”

At some point the jars are dumped and cleaned to

make room for new dust and sun to pass through.

**Morning Walk**

There is nothing here that is ours alone,
as age reminds us more and more to leave
without this skin of flesh and mind of bone

and wander once again in spirit’s zone
to contemplate what once was ours to grieve:
there is nothing here that is ours alone,

where all who are lost and ceaselessly drone,
“We came here to discover, not conceive,
without this skin of flesh and mind of bone

that limits, halts, obstructs what dreams have grown,
as if our webs of truth have begged us weave,
there is nothing here that is ours alone:”

a tragedy of sight: what’s unbeknown,
a something we could share or soon retrieve,
without this skin of flesh and mind of bone,

hoping for answers that we can’t disown,
that may be ours if we could just believe,
there is nothing here that is ours alone
without this skin of flesh and mind of bone.

My journey’s end was long ago, I’m here

and now today. I know this peace between

my hells, it’s where I choose to stay. It’s clear

that I observe all pasts and futures seen

as school, a method to arrange my be-

ing, so I’ll leave the fool, that happenstance

that left God’s help, where I thought I was free.

I never was in charge of things, that dance

was always me, alone and lost, but try-

ing hard to build fantastic lies. There’s too

much tempting me as always, life does cry,

“Surprise,” when least expected, like it’s new,

illusions on life’s stage; but God’s my sage,

I’ll stay right here, ignoring what’s hell’s rage.

**Happy Hour**

An infestation of in-laws,

haphazard as public square pigeons,

smarms in black and white

with the periodicity

of light beer commercials,

stages flights of happiness

between communal cooings,

always makes room for another round

of shots and bites for those

with ground level views.

“Just show up and, just show up and,” Divine

Mother shares these. Her healing hands embrace

us all, with silent gifts that please, Her sign

of great things to come, even when we face

our fears, our quiet triggers, like rugs ripped

from beneath our feet, tears at times when we

don’t know how or why we are always gripped

by past encounters, forever not free,

so ill-equipped to deal with moving for-

ward. Rest, relax, find calm, be still. Mother

is always here, and never leaves. The poor

of skill need only accept Her other-

ness of helping, Her Will, Her pleasant skill,

Her guiding as we climb this brutal hill.

**Haiku**

Tamed guilt kills claimed deeds,

like hail on rain drenched wheat fields,

sown with stone for seeds.

“If I wanna go broke,” is a very

weird but common expression. It belies

a lifetime of planning, formal cherry-

picking for relics on garbage day, buys

of things needed as household wares, between

part time jobs with no strings attached, nor ben-

efits: living paycheck to paycheck seen

as expected and necessary, when

all is too lean, haphazard as the tease

guessed on Fridays, dreading Mondays, choosing

tuna casserole over Mac and cheese,

while grazing for food bank items, schmoozing

with cockroaches, biding for crumbs, hiding

in plain sight, so just like us, subsiding.

**Haiku**

I don’t want to know

which side of the dilemma

I want to be on.

Life has trained me not to trust. “What?” You say.

Yeah, I know. “Fool me once,” over and o-

ver again, just like back in school, the way

of the world, Lucy and Charlie, you know,

with the football. “Come on, one more time, it

won’t hurt!” Life’s agenda. What’s to figure

out? Knock me down, get back up, the same shit

I’m expected to tolerate and sure

as hell permit? I’m a punching bag, a

whipping pole, a trash can, a cure for earth’s

ills, a remedy for when things go the

best sure way of normal here, balance: births

and deaths, ups and downs. Wait a minute. Fate

is that unendurably great? Checkmate!

**Haiku**

Your life overflows

with non-directed purpose

and valium dreams.

There are days, and ***then there are days***. The world

is in flux. So am I. Is it the calm before the storm

or the eye? Does it matter? No. I’m curled

up in a ball emotionally. Norm-

al for me, I suppose. Routines are now

important landmarks, more than park benches.

I can rest while working them. It’s the Tao

of relaxation within the trenches,

wondering how I can ever move on.

Worrying is my pillow. Soft and cool.

I carry it like a stuffed bear, withdrawn,

aloft, out of sight of company, cruel

as night, or emptiness, the constant stress

of knowing without relief. That’s my mess.

**Sustained**

I’m tapped out as I try to write more verse

on why I need to write. The pain that I’ve

lived with my whole life is now just a curse

I’d like to send back home. I’d love to drive

my folks nuts with the chance to speak up and

put my myths in print for all to read. The

dream to tell my side as sound and right, stand

on my own, but not in their midst, is a

plan I have yet to grasp. It makes no sense.

Not now. Not at all. But what can I do

to prove to them all that they were wrong, fence

them in with words they can’t touch or change? Sue

for back love, like I’d know what it was, or

how to use it, to spend it at what store?

When Zillow shows my next home lawn, a cem-

etary plot, I’m thinking maybe Hell’s

arrived, my fate is getting hot. Mayhem

is knocking at my door. Its ghostly smells

are fierce. It reckons I’ve run out of time,

and knows what dreams to pierce. My luck’s been ill,

my fortune’s black, my health’s a brazen crime.

I’ve nothing left to pay off debts, my will

ain’t worth a dime. I think I could go fish-

ing if I had a pole or line. But string

and sticks are all I’ve got, with broken dish

to dine, a torment when my hunger’s cling-

ing to my stomach’s pangs, fulfilling bangs

of empty pots: a song for life’s shebangs.

**Daily Hurdles**

No longer care of ends or means, no long-

er care of here; no longer care of how

or why, or death or love or fear. Life’s song

is a monotony; what stays is now,

not when. It’s ruthlessness is crushing same;

it’s timelessness: Amen. It always off-

ers otherness, that’s how it plays the game.

It’s laughter is a playful tease, a scoff-

ing hurtful blame. Rules unexplained, we should

have guessed, all faults are surely ours. The game’s

as fair as motion’s clock, like bad and good

in hours: a ballroom waltz, with unknown names,

invisible, like fate, though never late

for sentencing, “Try to negotiate!”

**Regrets**

So Deb’s been gone, five years, six days; the plans

we had are dust. Like all things in this world

of grief, we’ve failed to master trust. The cans

and dos and don’ts have come and gone like hurled

cement. We have not ducked or circumvent-

ed what the fates have sent. We’ve trudged along

with goals so strong, but have not made a dent

in all the works we thought were good. What’s wrong

with where we went? It’s disappeared from view

right now, like changing scenes on stage. These af-

ter thoughts don’t help at all, we can’t renew

time’s gauge. Right now all we can do is laugh

or cry hyena speech: a dismal reach

towards Heaven’s gate, as if our hurt could breach.

**The Orbit**

My skin skids like the car she drives, though I

have not seen her in six years. We have made

just a few phone calls since last March, to try

to see if frayed ends fit. We hope to trade

dirt, scratch our roots. I can feel her thoughts bent

on this house as she crawls through states out west

of here. I want to know if she was sent

by our folks to cut a deal. She will test

my face for lies to see if I’ve been coached

by those same two flakes back east. We may dig

through the best kept parts of our pasts, the poached

hoards that were kept hid for too long, a big

deal for two kids who did not know how to

grow up till old age was as good as new.

What is “a waste of time” down here? How can

we fail at work? Are trials, that we think

have meaning, things that we can shirk? What man

knows of alternatives, best paths that link

to goals? What steps, what turns, what measured means,

give rise to dreams, not holes? Divine direc-

tions sometimes fool, like paths that cross ravines.

Our progress, with its stops and starts, is tech-

nically “betweens.” So what we have with “wastes

of time,” are “times to ponder waste.” There is

no time, who ponders Self, who’s had what tastes

distaste.  Through “Being,” though we find life’s quiz,

a ponderous display, is worth the stay,

for silence stopped, where love alone’s the way.

I have no charm, I have no health, I have

no work right now. I have no sense, for sense

is crap, I know not why nor how. My salve

is dirt, my dreams are dust, what is intense

is age. I have no time, I’ve what offends,

I have no place or stage. I have no words,

I have no thoughts, I watch approaching ends.

I have no past, I have no plans, I’m nerds

with no up trends. I have no faith. I am

not smart. I have no worthy skills. I just

pretend to know what’s known, I hate remem-

bered drills. I live and live deserved disgust,

I have no thing that’s free. I’ll never be

life’s priceless guest; I’m no…toriety.

**Scratched Record, of an Inner Child**

You are the iron on my lapel,

the shoe horn inside my heel,

the dock that prevents my boat

from throwing itself on the beach.

I must touch you with my gold,

my bouquet, my report cards.

You are my ghoul so I will

not continue to be “It” all

the time, but here I go again.

Why can’t I just once hold out

my arms and you fill the holes?

I’ve found that change is awfully good, but not

for those I know. Expectancies are hur-

dles, triggers, trauma as I grow. The plot

is metamorphic, ever feasting, blur-

ring sight, while clinging to past loyalties

and pushing fear and flight. I’m seeking love,

security, and friendship: what a tease,

from those who made dysfunction happen, shov-

ing me with ease, now backwards, forwards, up-

side down, their puppet on their strings. I’m free

to leave my past and all those crazed disrup-

tive things. But unknowns, far from habits, plea

for me to stay right here, expressing cheer

for Hells I know, and not risk peace I fear.

**Par Igneous**

I look at my past

like a mountain looks down

upon the roadway that winds

up its side.

I am not

the one who puts up

the falling rock signs.

The payment I received from youth was pain;

I paid for it: a priceless rare commod-

ity, this pain is valued shit. The gain

I have in feeling blessed, escaping rod

and scorn, makes holding pain a pinned on med-

al, wounds that I have borne, a war time gift

that I have earned, a lifetime rosy bed,

in which I joyously reside, a lift

from pasts so dead. The pain is claim for liv-

ing, so what other choice is there? Do I

refute the past I’ve earned, and now forgive

Hell’s fare? Am I still steeped in war apply-

ing fences for defense? Does pain make sense,

like coinage wealth, or is pain failed pretense?

Why hold that pain like teddy bears? What use

is it for growth? Take pain or freedom from

the past, I surely can’t have both? Unloose

that corpse I’m dragging up the hill and come

on home. Unknown is health, so newly found,

but choice blinds where I roam. If I am breath-

ing, I am free, and never more so bound.

My heart and soul and mind are God’s, so wreathe

that peace that’s crowned, my holy being, it’s

what’s me. I need not search for goals. My un-

iverse resides within; there’s no more hits

or tolls: illusions all, these games, Hell’s boon,

that make me think I’m lost. So what’s the cost

of feeling sad? Pick up that choice I’ve tossed!

I laugh at feigned disaster as I walk

this blessed Hell. There might be strained opin-

ions that our rulers wish to sell. The talk

of favored news outlets can’t stifle sin

of truths. Earth’s lessons are like candy corn

dispensed at circus booths. Both sun and rain

still play their parts in spring and summer’s scorn. Tornadoes, droughts, and calm of crickets deign

to bless or warn. What marks our place are gowns

of habit stressed to hold us fast. We don’t

go in for realizations, ups and downs

we’ve passed. Our pendulums of solace won’t

remember what we do, as we accrue

decisions that pretend to get us through.

God’s push and pull are just the same, a force

when we’re aligned, both good and bad, as we’re

concerned, and products of our mind. Of course

duality is present as we fear

what’s drained, events all unexpected when

our vision’s finite strained. To seek the cen-

ter of the spinning is beyond what’s been,

or futures, that reflect the past, again

what’s now, or then. It’s all so simple, and

complex, when sight’s outside or in. The cha-

os is so entertaining, and what’s planned

as sin. But everything is still O.K.,

we’re not supposed to fear. What’s all so dear,

as Heaven’s goal, could not be far when here.

**Haiku**

Invisible knots

tied by deaf hands in the dark:

institution bound

When hurt is in the pie I bake there’re bet-

ter things to make. I needn’t place all things

that curse within each prized mistake. I’ve let

the hells of seasons past confuse what brings

me peace, concoctions that bring rage and storm,

and kidnap my release. I placate love,

as if a store bought, ancillary form.

Perhaps some day, but not right now, it’s shov-

ing what’s so warm, and cosy, hells I know,

these are the pains I always need. My hab-

its are a welcome mat, they help me sew

new feed, that keep me comfortable while grab-

bing failures I adore, a lethal chore

that I prefer to unknowns I’ll ignore.

My loyalty is not for earthly things

down here below. My spirit is a strang-

er here, my silence status quo. Earth’s kings

expect conformity, no saintly change

of heart, obedience and mindlessness,

all destined from the start. Their purpose is

in ruling all, their mandate nothing less.

Their lack of inner confidence, a quiz

they cannot guess. Diversions such as these

are welcomed by the Fates above, as tides

forever flowing to confuse and freeze

what’s love: That hidden silent teacher guides

us home if we but dare. But why should care

of things unseen, unknown, result in prayer?

Love is beyond both good and bad, it’s why

it always works. Its energy comes from

above, it’s safe for all us jerks, who try

avoidance, hiding here, so shamed from some-

one’s pain, blind grief and troubles passed along,

infectious and insane. It takes great will

and calm and strength to help unveil this wrong,

delivering what’s necessary, still-

ing pains lifelong. Love is the answer for

despair, for loneliness, and fright. It needs

to be allowed to flow, through hearts, ador-

ing light. All trials can be dumped as weeds,

before God’s altar high. We cannot die

relinquishing what knows not how to fly.

Epilogue: Unobstructed Vision

If everything

on God’s

green earth

has a purpose,

does the rain

on the window pane

really help

the glass

to grow?

I cry inside, like chalkboard nails, the sound

is better still, like August crickets, dron-

ing on towards Fall that’s straight uphill. What’s ground-

ed into childhood, and makes alone

so sweet, are masks for every holiday,

a fisted trick or treat, with costumes one

can wear all year, as in a festive play,

a make believe for life itself, what’s spun

public display: comedic tragedy

worth Tonies, Oscars, Globes, and more. Real-

ities stay hidden. Inner eyes can see

the score. While sharing what’s been Hell here shall

we make new deals with hate? Is it too late

to shatter nightmares, backpacked loathsome freight?

I am not in control today, I’m sure

I never was. It’s comforting to think

of pain as don’ts that do because, the cure

is always worse, you know, it’s like the brink

of cliffs, a matter of discretion, choice,

like buts, and ands, and ifs, like oracles

that monitor all futures, pasts, and voice,

what will be coming round the bend, what culls

makes fiends rejoice. Life is just juggled cha-

os, hot potatoes for us all, an end-

less stream of foibles, so we’re making hay

with gall. I’m still not in control, I’ve penned,

I never was for sure. The only cure

for ending strife is passing from Earth’s tour.

I don’t trust my inner loving parent.

I am a hornet’s nest of uninten-
tional retributions. The more I vent
and share, the more I accumulate sen-

tient pets that demand my attention. They
feed off of me; regrets on my playground,
my jungle gym, swings, and slide, where I play
at being the adult I haven’t found

yet to this day. My authority fig-
ures can’t help bullying, while loving me
with directions that reprimand. I’m big,
but shoving my loving parent I see

as a ghost who won’t leave; I can’t retrieve
what I never had or knew, but now grieve.

Ya gotta laugh like Hell, for Hell is laugh-

ing at us still. It is responsive danc-

ing from our sergeant’s barking drill, that gaff

of ticking tocking time that lays out chance

for bets, when choices are the thing we mind,

while blindness soon forgets. It may not mat-

ter what we choose, results are most unkind,

for expectations do fall short and flat,

always maligned. We want, we see, we fail

to balance pasts with futures hoped. What comes

is never what we think, it’s how we nail

what’s coped. Ya hafta laugh when dreams are thumbs,

sometimes they’re up and down: laugh like a clown with painted tears, life’s just an upside frown.

The hurt that we’ve experienced, exemp-

lary Earth’s pain, reflects our Golden at-

titude, Hell’s grip and Heaven’s reign. Contemp-

orary chaos blinds us all to Mat-

ter’s skill; for Mother guides us onward towards

a love up yonder hill, a selfless pose

of giving, where what’s sought are no rewards,

a stance where love is ever present, knows

what’s God’s accords. For those who have ears let

them hear, for “heart” is “hurt” undone. And “pain”

is “pon” a bridge of light, our paved gauntlet

towards One, that source and goal that we profane,

as if we had a choice, while inner voice

reminds us all, “Be Still; bravely rejoice.”

We’ve “Poisoned wells,” like what the hell? I heard

it read today. The basics are those things

we need, what else can we now say? It’s blurred

all reservoirs we use where hope now stings

and blights. Who thinks that “poisoned wells” make sense?

This world blends darks with lights? So “poisoned wells”

are Snow White’s apple; we’re without defense.

The play of riddled harm is such that hells

are too intense. We search for safer paths

that may bestow a greater peace.  A place

of optimism where these pains of baths

may cease, where “poisoned wells” will never grace

that home we search for here, a place where fear

and hate and trials will truly disappear.

Asking for help, when little, only op-

ened that door of slaps with words, stares, silence.

The next door: withdrawal, a love of hope,

a dread of stage, a witness to violence,

then fear. And now as I grey, you want me

to share all my wounds here, like collected

nicknacks: “I know you’ll love this one,” that spree

of broken dishes, plates, promises, said

with love, that plea, for forgiveness, through just

one more drink, just one, like the other side

of the street, in traffic, alone. I must

not smother where I am now, try to hide,

like when I was three: memories, so them:

a vengeance on me, a limp, broken stem.

This ACOA is my home, it’s not

that I am lost. It’s just that I am hes-

itant, not knowing of the cost. I plot

investigations into how to guess

what’s next, these hurts in buried memory,

a Jason Voorhees’ text. Can I withstand

the horrors in this fun house treachery?

Can I relive these painful deeds, worms canned

for all to see? These past events? Illu-

sions, they don’t touch who I am now. It’s like

a horror movie, though it seems so new

and how. I now defend myself and strike

back with a strength from friends, who help me cleanse

my hopes and dreams so past crap simply ends.

I am content, I know my pain, it’s what

has brought me here. I know I’m reaching bet-

ter, for I’ve nothing else to fear. I’ve shut

out all distractions that inhibit get-

ting well. I’ve found this group’s a Heaven that

now frees myself from Hell.  We hold each oth-

er’s hands throughout what’s difficult to chat.

My words bring up my past like when my moth-

er called me brat, or worse, those raw embar-

ressments that pressed my soul to flee, escap-

ing all the feelings that won’t let me car-

ry me. It’s all a looping ugly tape

that needs to find the trash; reworking hash,

won’t benefit, I’ll let it burn and crash.

Community, discovery, it’s where

we’ve found a home, a place of safety, hope,

and love; we’ve no more need to roam. The car-

ing hearts that welcome us and help us cope

with fears, are those like us who’ve walked the walk,

and lived a life of tears. One day at a

time is how we step, learning how to talk,

revealing hidden secrets, agenda

we fear to stalk. The trials that we went

through now become the gauntlets tread. By hold-

ing hands with fellow souls we cast off pent

up dread. Togetherness is not so cold,

it’s warmer in love’s group, where we can troop

along life’s path and not mind what’s Hell’s soup.

All those who are old are not litter,

not all who are hurting are lost,

the old who seek love are not bitter,

though healing may come with a cost.

From old language lost words shall be woken,

a light from rare shadows will spring,

renewed shall be mantra that’s spoken,

the grounded again shall take wing.

There are no worries, once I’m here, for here

is where hearts are. It’s where love is within,

without, a constant peaceful star.  It’s near-

er than my breath or gaze, my silent twin,

that’s all. It’s here to love me each day while

I think I rise and fall. The past is gone,

it never was; and futures share that file.

There’s love and here, and here and love, what’s dawn-

ing with a smile. Life’s play is for observ-

ing, all that’s good and bad and fine. God’s light

which is what’s really me just wants to serve

my shine, once I awaken to this right,

my place amongst the blessed, I’ll know life’s test, embraced at last, confirms what’s all that’s best.

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