

Circles of Light

by

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Father, whose love for poetry inspired me to love it also, and who spent many hours showing me how to improve my writing.

I want to be a poet,
Not an educated word-twister
Whose hollow cleverness leaves
No mark within the human breast;
Nor a rhymester who sing-songs
Of empty sentiment.
But a poet...

...whose hand reaches out
across eternity's
to touch the hand
of God.

Spirit Cycles

The Circle of Friendship

Good-by? I doubt it friend.
This warm embrace is not the end
As our first meeting was not the start.
These several months we've shared so much,
But many things are left untouched;
And life's too short, and love's too strong,
To tie it to this world alone.

And yet, this longing moment feels so cold.
Here, arms outstretched,
Our fingers, reluctant, release their hold,
As if we share some need to touch
Once more, before you leave,
To ease the pain we both must bear.

And if death be termed, and rightly so,
As separation--I suffer death to see you go.
Hello's, good-by's, our births and deaths,
Eternal they seem in a world of seasons
Where our very lives rise and set.

Yet, if Christ came to ransom us from death,
Both what we suffered in leaving God
To dwell down here,
And again when fleeing this mortal sphere;
the death by which we're born below,
And the death, and birth, by which we go.

If Christ can bring these death's to end
Within the realms of perfect day,
I must believe in simple faith,
That this death, too, must pass away,
Within the realm where glory shines.

Our lives will once again entwine
When circles come full round again.
Good-by's will never last my friend;
This love had birth in eons past
And can but grow, forever fast.

I Sing the Morning

Sun-rays break the mountains, streaming,
In shafts of misty sunlight, shining;
Awake my soul from deep-sleep, dreaming,
Rise to the new life in me, dawning.

Chill the air and long the darkness,
Embracing deep the night's dark fury,
Peace 'til now seemed all but vanquished,
But here in joy I sing the morning.

Eyes now single, mists receding,
Spirit speaks to my spirit, needing,
All to my remembrance, bringing
Pierced the center of my being.

Join the song of love, redeeming,
Welcome streams of light revealing,
Awake the soul from deep sleep, dreaming,
Rise to the new life in me, dawning.

Rebirth

Rain-drenched roses spice the air;
Purified, fresh and fair,
The earth--still wet with heaven's tears--
Speaks peace, a ray my heart can hold,
Water can yet immerse the old,
And tears can purge my troubled soul
To bring me forth renewed and whole.
For I, much like the e waking earth,

Again can capture heaven's birth,
Can once more feel the Son's light shine,
His healing power, his love divine,
That burns out impure desire,
With tongues of flame, the living fire.
The clean wet air, the rainbow sign,
Reflect this joy and peace I find
While rays of sun that pierce the grey
Find in my heart the dawning day.

Closet Prayer

Alone tonight, just thee and me;
A time to talk, a time to see
In closet prayer's revealing light
A glimpse into eternity.

Like Isaiah (Isaiah 50:4-7)

God gave the gift of speech to me
To speak in strength for Him;
He placed the tongue of learning in my mouth
That I might give an answer in all seasons.
Why fear therefore my voice to raise?
Put trust in the Word, both mouth and pen
Will He fill with wisdom to confound the wise,
And light the darkness inside of men.
Like an arrow in his quiver He will hide me,
Sharpen with affliction, polish in trial;
Until He uses me, a straight shaft,
To deliver his word where He would send.
Lift up my voice from fear, therefore,
And trust in God's sure hand,
Set face like flint, He will support,
His arm is sufficient;
His bow abideth in strength.

In Remembrance

I eat, remembering,
Not as the apostles remembered,
Whose hearts with life in His, died
In quivering terror at each hammer blow,
His body broken as the bread they ate.
I was not there
To drink with Him the cup,
Then shiver at the blood-sweat on his brow;
Yet, I live anew within his love.
Not as the apostles, remember I Him,
Yet, drink, remembering.

A Testimony Borne on Prayer (Revelation 3:20)

As with you I sought to share
My knowledge of God's listening ear,
Our Heavenly Father's Spirit there
Evoked each eye to yield a tear.
The Spirit touched your heart, as mine,
We felt it speaking, soft, yet clear,
Its sweetness fills with a love divine,
That let's us know our Father is near.

Gone were the walls of worldly fears;
And drops of joy from tender eyes
Confirmed my faith that Father hears
And to our humble plea, replies.
For as I testified to you,
His Holy Spirit's presence pure
Bore witness what I said was true,
Indeed, He stands behind the door.

And in that moment, sacred, rare,
I knew you felt his presence near
And sensed with me His loving care
For each of us, His children here.
And all your life I hope you'll pray

To Him who dwells in home above,
That he may always bid you stay
Encircled in His arms of love.

My Mountain Home

Oh, home of my fathers, proclaimed “the right place, “
Oh, cool mountain valleys, where the Saints have found
grace.

My pioneer fathers found strength in your song,
And firm as your mountains they carried along
The banner of truth.

In day to day toil, they lifted their eyes
To white crested grandeur, to autumn sunrise;
In their fields as they paused, summer sweat on their
brow

They must have rejoiced, as I do now
At your God-blessed beauty.

I wonder if they beheld you today

Would they rejoice in our “civilized” way

Would they ask of our freeways, skyscrapers and malls;

Would any of these impress them at all?

No, I think they would ask, if their spirits could speak

Have you followed the light we came here to seek

Have you taught the commandments, the scriptures you
know,

Have you lived your lives so they will show

Praise to Him who blessed you with all.

And though they aren't present, to me they do call,

Through the lofty cathedrals that grace your broad
valleys--

The mountains, pleading, in the twilight of day

Are asking us clearly--do we walk the right way?

Me

There is a poet in me;

Crying for expression, arm outstretched to
touch the stars, a song that must be sung.

There is a philosopher in me;

Silent observer, pondering purpose,
smoothing rough edges.

There is a prophet in me;

A holy man, a man of God, prayer and
praise for our Creator.

There is a farmer in me;

A father, too. A builder, and artist, an
explorer.

There is an embryo of eternal life in me;

A clear gem of intelligence, a spark of
divinity, a touch of glory.

For I am a child of God.

Hymn of Praise

My praise I sing
To Thee on High;
Thy glory grows
and will not die.

Thy love hath filled
My soul with peace;
My praise to Thee
Shall never cease.

Thy blessings flow
Like water clear;
Thy Spirit speaks
Dispelling fear.

Refrain

My praise I sing
My love I bring,
My thanks I give,
To Thee

Part Two

Highs and Lows

Separation

This bond of love grows deeper now that we're apart
Your absence leaves a void within my heart.
Like all good things I never comprehended
How much you meant until our time together ended.
The little things that rubbed us wrong are a fading
ember,
Against the warmth of friendship, that long I will
remember;
And treasure union here and physical no longer
But by your very absence grown much stronger.

Brilliant Loneliness

In a blaze of glory summer dies
With yellows and reds in azure skies;
While joy of heart soft fades away
With a burst of love on deepening grey.
Bright as the fading, setting sun
I die inside, a lonely one;
Don't think these smiles my lips impart
Reflect some hidden joy of heart,
For acts of kindness I may show
Are autumn colors of hearts last glow.

Loss

These darkened days of naked trees
With remnants of scattered leaves
Upon the ground, cracked and hard
From winter's cruel disregard.
My side is empty, no child at play,
For barren of you I walk away
From city streets and concrete cold

Down the country lane we strolled.
In every child of golden hair
I dream of you and wish you there
That I might tarry for little while
Within the pleasures of your smile.
But birds return with spring's rebirth
And flowers soon will burst the earth,
Yet vain the prayers I long would bring
You forth again to warm my spring.

Naked

Naked night, neglectful cold,
Wind swept leaves trouble my soul;
Uprooted trees, broken boughs,
There is no room my heart to house.

Over the hill breaks cold moon-rise,
I cry in vain to the star-flecked skies,
"Take hold my step, oh violent night,
Illuminate, if but with pale star-light.
Sweep me up in your fury now,
For you cannot bend a broken bough."

Lamentations of Love

This irrational heart of mine
Has fallen in love a dozen times
 (or maybe more)
Then wound up shattered on the floor
In pieces not really worth repair.
Yet somehow it mended anyway
And the flames were quenched,
 (I'm pleased to say)
But you have the dubious honor it seems
 (Thrust upon you by my heart.)
Of being the first of all my dreams
To resurrect in a perfect state,
Both heart and head to former fate
Of hopeless love.

(Not one throb lost.)
Your memory disturbs my dreams
With all the little childish scenes
Of fantasy love, which clogged my brain
When I was young

(And that's a pain!)
Problems I know,
Are all this one-side love can grow.
It sows no seeds of satisfaction
Just reaps its tears and lamentations
Mixed in fears.

(My heart is blind, again.)
Still, inside, I hope someday
Your heart awakes to love for me.
If that can be.

(I guess we'll see.)

(And as afternote:
I'm sad to add
I saw, and broke.)

Chains

What power am I yielding to
When just this morning I knelt in prayer
Promising Father His will to do
And expressing my deepest love?
What grey pollution clouds the light
That just an hour past I basked in, true;
What blocks the warmth from heavenly heights
And seeks to chain me to the world?
Someone strives to steal my agency!
I cannot serve that prince of night;
God gave a right of choice to me
I was born free, I'm not a slave.
Oh, why as a child of heavenly light,

Do I, so used to realms of glory,
Allow myself to stray from right
And droop in sins dread chains.

I long to tear these bands asunder
And free myself from this yoke of sin;
To shake these chains which drag me under
And soar like the birds, free forever.

Leaf

I hold a breath of autumn's treasure
A golden drop of aspen grief
A simple token of heaven's love
For just one single little leaf.

Waiting

Quite, peaceful,
Beside the warm fire,
The only sound the gentle crackle of flame,
And occasional shifting of settling log.
The fire warms the face,
But the cold night wind still sinks deep,
And shivers strike my naked heart.
Dying softly now,
The embers fight faintly against the darkness,
Against death;
While the chill night wind drives deeper still,
And my soul is hollow
Under silent stars.
Do not cry, soul,
Just sleep.
As the embers fade to soft grey ash,
Sleep.
The morning will come,
Sleep.

Trials

My soul has taken joy,
In blessings born of pain,
For suffering and trial
Have borne me fruit for gain..

Hymn: I Kneel in Need of Thee, Oh Lord

In pride I've walked in my own way,
But now I know the gospel's way,
From chains of sin I must be free,
So I kneel in need of thee.

Refrain

I kneel in need of thee, Oh, Lord,
I kneel in need of thee,
Oh, hear my humble plea, Oh, Lord,
I kneel in need of thee.

My spirit troubled, my heart in ache,
So selfish, all I've done is take,
Centered on I, worried for me,
Now, I kneel in need of thee.

Oh, bless this contrite erring one
Through thine Only Begotten Son;
Grant my spirit at rest to be,
For I kneel in need of Thee.

Send me grace from heaven above,
Consuming fire, thine arms of love;
Open my eyes that I might see,
As I kneel in need of Thee.

Thy peace has come, my heart at rest,
I know that in thy love I'm blessed;
Permit me not to stray from thee,
Keep me kneeling in need of thee.

Part Three

Of Circles and Boxes

Boxes and Gods

Land squared by hot, hard, black street,
And row after row of stucco boxes,
Garnished with sprigs of dirty, wilted shrubbery
And flower-splashes to brighten the dull-grey of
suberbian smog.
The underbeat of the city.
Ears deafened to the dull roar,
Our inner clocks race to the rapid thumping of piston
engines.
Impatient,
Wrapped in the ticktock of time;
We run to catch up with the invisible tempo.
We live in boxes,
Dependent on the corporate gods
Southern California Edison and the local Alpha Beta
Far from the simplicity of faith
We'd starve in the dark if we failed to pay tribute to the
gods.

We know the cycle of life from books:
Grass converting sunlight to chemical energy;
Cows consuming grass and producing milk;
But in reality, it comes from boxes,
Provided by the food chain god--
Pasteurized, homogenized,
And vitamin enriched.
Far from the sun,
Our end of the food chain
Is processed, packaged and purchased
With printed tribute paper.

Thus we live,
In boxes,

Out of boxes,
And when we die,
We're boxed ourselves
And buried in the nice green place
We failed to enjoy while we lived.

Do we wonder that people no longer understand God?
They cannot thank him for the rain,
A corporate god pipes their water from the hills.
They cannot praise the sunrise
It cannot be seen through the dirty air
And the electric god provides their light
They cannot rejoice in the fruitful harvest
They gather their produce from grocery shelves.

As a child I was intimate with the earth,
I dug lakes with a shovel
And filled them with the garden hose;
But, Mother made me strip on the back porch and bathe
Cursing the dust from whence I came.

Older now, I seek larger playgrounds,
Where water bubbles from earth's fountains
And the voice of the wind is heard in the pines.
Never noticing the dirt,
Nor the smell of the campfire smoke in my clothes
Until I pass through the ceremonial cleansing
That admits me again to the world of boxes.

I long to flee the corporate gods forever,
To sit upon the edge of night, counting stars,
And whisper a prayer to the living God of living things:
"Grant me no heaven with gold-paved streets
Nor mansions of marble in heavenly heights,
Rather give a home of stones and logs
On an honest plot of naked ground
Permit me to embrace my mother earth
Until I return into her womb"

666-66-6666

We, the guardians of the state,
Hearby bequeath and bestow upon you
Your social security number,
By which you shall be known
Upon the computers of the United States Government,
And by every licensed institution
With whom you are free to associate.
Memorize this number, treasure it always,
For it is token of the covenant,
Key to welfare checks and unemployment compensation,
Social retirement and tax withholdings;
For a birth certificate you are
And a probate record you will be,
Worlds without end,
Amen and
Amen.

Muffled Cry

The dark silence of earliest day
Amplifies the common sounds,
Tires spinning on asphalt streets;
The freeway, where the truckers pass,
Single autos bearing night travelers;
A car door slams, the street lights hum;
The waxing, waning whistle of a distant train
Carries far across the empty streets.
The city slumbers, except these few,
The night-owl drivers, the engineer,
The watchman on his rounds, and I.

I lie within my cubic room
Aware of sounds unmade by man;
The cricket chirp, a barking dog,
The breeze that stirs the neighbors elm;
I know somewhere the rats and roaches play,
The alley cat, pigeon and sparrow
Hid within the cracks and shadows
In vain I close my eyes to dream,

But stars pale against electric glow.

Three, three, six, reads the digital clock;
The buzzer is set for seven;
The city will wake as I arise
To shower and shave and dress for work;
The singular sounds will multiply
Merge and clash to common din and roar;
These still thoughts will also disappear
When the sun hides the few remaining stars.

Toys (Or Me and My Son)

My son cannot leave things in order
He struggles to his feet beside the coffee table
And drags each magazine off to the floor;
He will clear the bookcase,
When your back is turned
Tear and taste the pages from my thesaurus.
The mixing bowls so neatly fit to size
He bangs and leaves upon the kitchen floor
To seek more order to undo.

Me? I built a castle at Reid State Park
Fortifications of pressed, damp sand
Paper-cup towers, ocean water moat
Rose from the chaos.
Uncontent with that disturbance
I built a city about the castle,
Low round houses where the peasants dwell,
Mounds and walls and city gates
Covered a ten foot circle on the beach.
Then, twenty-six years old,
I played the monster,
Stomped the city back to native sand
Killing a thousand imaginary peasants
Ate the king
And sent the refugees fleeing to the desert beach.

Patently, I stack the mixing bowls,

Rearrange the magazines upon the coffee table,
Each book is returned to the shelf
Alphabetized by author and title
He will pull them down again,
When I am not looking
After all, he is my son.

Steed of Steel

Cold steel steed in a concrete stall,
Shiny wax coat and a scrubbed white wall,
Pressed steel hide with a block iron heart,
Four-fifty horses with electronic start,
Fed on lead-free dinosaur blood,
Crude black oil your chewing cud--
Your rider of flesh knows no fear,
Puts pedal to metal and pops in gear.

Alternator power, from battery store,
Jumps nerves of copper to engine core,
Coil heightened, distributor turning,
Sparks air and blood to set it burning,
Up and down to round and round,
Clutch, transmission and driveshaft down,
Differential to axle, axle to wheel,
Burned rubber asphalt for his master's thrill.

Round the bend at one-hundred-four
Hitting the straightaway, pumping for more,
Rider of flesh his only brain,
Exhaust breath puffing, he feels no pain.
Split second timing, split second miss,
Squealing brake, crash and hiss,
Shattered glass woe, crumpled steel hide,
"Master" of horses crushed inside,
Cold steel steed embraces a pole;
Block iron coffin enshrouds a soul.

Weep not for the steed, no tear or sound,
When crude oil blood drops to the ground.

Part Four

Nature

Spring Song

My winter-lazy legs pay an aching price for the journey,
But I must go,
Testing bone and muscle against rock and earth,
I reach for the alpine lakes,
To watch the water cascading off the rocks
And wonder at the golden buttercups enlivening the
alpine meadows.
But most of all, I go to hear the water's song.
It arises with chill anticipation from the silent
snowfields,
Trickles from the slushy snowbanks,
Tumbles from the glistening rocks.
Its tempo quickens, its crescendo rises,
To fill the swollen creeks in thunderous finale.
I go because the song beckons me,
It bids me dance while the melody is young
Before it fades, falls silent in the winter snows to wait.
The water, too, must dance, stay fresh and clean.
Stagnant water, like stagnant souls,
Slowly saturates with death and rot.
While the song plays, we must strain to follow.

A Song of Spring

The winter is angry;
He clashes with spring;
Her warmth has turned
His clouds to rain.

Her freshness laughs;
His grey clouds brood;
Her buds and smiles
Don't help his mood.

His freezing wind
Sends kites into the sky;
She softens him slowly;
He yields with a sigh.

Come, come she calls
With joyous delight,
Birds circling her head
In graceful flight;

Come, come she dances
In cleansing rain;
Open your heart,
And ease your pain.

Changing Moods

I have climbed the north fork trail
A dozen times in every season of the year.
I have:

Witnessed the premier snowfall,
 when fluffy flakes calmly covered fall's decay;
Tramped its path when the hills slept
 under soft snow blankets;
Watched the spring sun transform quiet
 fields of snow into thunderous torrents of water;
Observed the flowers,
 growing and changing,
 brightening the greens and browns
 with splashes of color;
Loved the trees:
 stark in winter ice,
 budding and unfolding in lush green,
 and again as they carpet the forest floor
 in tapestries of crunchy color.

Year after year I have returned.
Until friends query, "What! That same place, again?"

And with a soft smile, I return, "It is never the same place."

Autumn Memory

A nip of frost touches the breeze
That carries with it withered leaves
And tastes of snow-falls yet to come.
As I walk past the clear, chilled stream,
Bearing on it the bits of gold
Dropped from trees numbed by the cold,
I catch the scent of fallen leaves
Damp from last night's autumn rain;
And vaguely sense some long-past pain;
The heartbreak of a summer love
I never knew...

Lost Youth

Come back, youthful friend,
Let us play with the children,
And care for the stranger.
Let us forsake the traffic jam of formality
And chase butterfly dreams in green meadows.
It is a true saying:
 Dreams produce no material comforts.
But are the rich happy?
We shall sing a song of gladness for life itself.
We shall treasure life's breath in our lungs,
And the tickle of grass underfoot.
Eyes raised high,
We'll love the stars of the darkest night.
Oh, bright-eyed youth,
Come back to me.
Come back to me.

Autumn Nostalgia

I passed the familiar camp parking sign
And raced down the road towards camp.
As I slowed to a walk on the open field,
I breathed with ease again,
But it wasn't the same.

The autumn mountains are lonely.

Only the wind plays among the trees
Where once the children ran in delight.
The leaves swirl past bolted doors of cabins,
Once filled with experience,
Now empty, with memories.

The still surface of the once squealing swimming hole
Is covered gently with fallen leaves.
Its glassy surface is only a reflection
Of what seemed a summer's eternity.

I sighed and turned homeward.
The dead leaves on summer dry grass
Are all too chilling reminders
That the silent snows shall soon cover all.

Testimony

I witnessed Thy testimony tonight,
Saw it flash against the darkness
Lighting the night like a thousand neon signs,
Heard it roll across the valley
Slapping the air with the voice of an ocean.
It veiled the stars and cloaked the moon,
Sent the floods pounding every roof.
There was no fear within my heart,
But awe, respect and admiration.

And when wars rage and famine strikes,
Or earthquakes shake with dreaded power,
When the sun grows dark and the moon is blood,

And the heavens roll together as a mighty scroll,
I shall not fear,
I know thy voice,
Thy sweet, and peaceful,
Loving voice.

Importance?

Little ant,
Upon my pants,
Are you aware
As you walk there,
That I'm a living creature, too?
I am a child of Him who made you,
And he has sent us here
To share this mortal sphere.
So you've a right, by your ant-birth
To life with me upon this earth.
I'll even bet your ant-ly soul,
Is just as unique as people I know.

Part Five

Without Beginning of Days

Deja Vu

The lonely lane and the rush of wind.

It howls, tossing trees in its fury,
Then stills in haunting silence.
Pink snow blows from flowering trees
And presses in drifts against the roadside.
Lazy clouds drift across azure skies,
Softening the sun's sharp shadows.

My mortal world is carried away on the wind,
And there is a whispering of a far-away land,
A world I once knew in a time beyond earth reckoning,
Another place,
Called home.

Parent and Child

Clear, bright-eyed child of my image,
Round-eyed in awe at a world so large and new
It begs to be explored.
You fun beside us;
Your spirit hampered by a tiny body
And sleep-like forgetting.

Often I ponder on whence you came,
So soon removed from that veiled sphere
Where once we walked as brothers and sisters;
Where once your spirit body, small and eager,
Ran beside a far different Father and Mother,
Whom we've both forgotten.

Eternal Friendship

How can this friendship grow so fast?
And why this love, so deep and true,
Between two, who but a short time past
Lived as strangers in this earthly realm?
Some common bond welds heart to heart,
A oneness, transcending mortal masks;
Bonds too strong to have had their start
Just yesterday--they seem more like forever.

Breaths of memory, gentle whispers,
Sift through our clouded minds;
For we are spirit brothers and sisters
From long before the dawn of time.
Friends in spirit, from worlds of light,
The children of forgotten Glory,
And these dim flickers of memories lost, grow bright,
As our love renews in mortal life.

But, here we dwell, that past unknown,
Our futures likewise dimly lit
Yet this brief touch of memory shone,
Has welded us, forever friends.

Part Six

Journey into Life

Death of Youth

My neighbors gathered at the scent of death
Like moths to flame and crowds to siren scream,
As I, through wide-flung door sought to aide
My stricken youth, who fell within my gate
On homeward journey from his quest;
Their indignation caused me pause
Before his fallen frame,
As they with solemn facade muttered,
“Let him die, he holds no worth.”

I halted, choking back desire,
Unwilling to act counter to the norm,
Until my youth raised eyes to mine
Jabbing my heart with pain-filled stare,
Speaking in tones of disappointed faith:
“I cannot bear this Godless world longer;
My life lies forfeit at manhood’s gate,
And his hand cannot reach to save me
From the quicksand troubles rapid pull;
The pain descends and I fall with it as to hell.
I am doomed and none but God will witness
Of the rightness of my struggle
Against the false, demanded molds.
The voices of this world cry in condemnation
Swelling through my brain in nigh satanic chorus,
Chanting fault and doom and black abyss:
‘Impulsive, impractical,
Dreamer of idealistic impossibility,
Sensitive crier of worthless tears,
And visionary youth whose vain imaginations
Are the path of doom.’
Such are my wounds and death alone will heal.”

I reached for him, but hissing words
Restrained my care again.
They answered him with salt, not salve:
“Oh, fool youth, who feigns his quest of God,
Was this his plan for his crusaders?
Behold the joy of we who safely rest
In practicality’s fortress and wisdom’s tower,
While you with pretended vision of some vain ideal,
Lie stricken, victim of the world’s tower,
While you with pretended vision of some vain ideal,
Lie stricken, victim of the world’s bitter slashes.
Behold your bleeding life, sweat and tears,
And dreamy hopes ebbed out at every pore.
You youth, are mad, and dying in your madness,
Your blood exposed for all to see;
You are different, and your peculiarity is your fall,
Your fated doom enduring your own weirdness,
Without end.”

Their words woke angry fight in me:
“You dare condemn my dying youth
Whose sword of truth and shield of faith
Have been his only alias against the dark hordes
Rising on our troubled lands;
Selfish profits who slave the world
To geared machine and concrete ruts
From which wheels never free.
He alone had the courage to see
And then to fight, fight with every breath of life
And hope’s last elevating ray.
He witnessed the demon cataract
Hurling humanity headlong to eternal flames
And turned upstream against satanic odds
To fight towards the mountain sun,
To blaze a trail towards the promised land,
And you fools shall not mourn his loss?”

Their desperate-laughter hiding shame
Echoed hollow on my brain:
“Fool Speaks defending fool.
Your idealistic honor is sign

Of your belonging to his putrid fate,
To rot and lay forgotten
Like a thousand other youths
Squandered in causes for which
We give no damn.
He spent his life for not,
And if you persist in this vain praise
You seal your doom and death with his
In fruitless battle of the stream of life.
Better let the fluid white caps sweep along
And placate passion in momentary orgasmic thrills
Upon the waves.
If their be those who die against the jags,
They be the weak,
We strong survive to meet and pass
Whatever fate the end may hold.
Life sacrificed is vanity
And youth is foolish.
We speak experience borne wisdom;
Life will flow, fight not against the drift,
The most you do is millimetrically alter course,
And those who dash their hearts
Against the current lose their heads;
Do not the youth's bold-oozing bruises
And final gasping struggles evidence our words?
Forebear conform, seek not peculiar ends as he."

This time their callous could not chill desire,
But only added power to the same.
I broke the chains that held my love
And stooped from pride to humble aid.
From dying fingers grip I pried the battered brand
And clutched him tender to my breast.
He gave a last long look into my eye
And voiced a plea that pierced my core
And fired soul with anger
Kindling my dry despair to wild flame:
"Blind they are, and foolish, too,
The end of their cold cataract is death, as mine,
But lacking honor or hope of heaven's gate,
Hell awaits with open mouth

To welcome fruit of their proud science.
Clarity has come to hear their shallow reason
And though no strength remains to raise
The sword of truth against their evil lies,
I die assured in hope of ever rest
Forget not my quest...forget not.”
His dented shield dropped from his hand
To rest upon the dust,
Now stained with tokens of his life and deeds.

“See here,” they softly counsel
As if the moment has pricked their hearts
With some pale touch of reverence
For passing honor.
“Leave him be, seek not his cause,
He, as our own bold youths, must perish
And we press on in this dark world
To gain what good is left to gain;
Food and shelter, drink and cloth,
These feed the body and warm the soul,
Not idle dreams or ideal hopes.
Learn well this lesson of your youth.”
They turned and shook their faces long
And I heard them mutter as they moved away,
“Leave him be, the lesson is well taken,
He shall settle to his fate,
Not perish like his fool youth .
Come now, we have gold to gather.”

Hell and the Grave

My servant bid the prophet enter
Thou I had given strict command
That none should pass this day
My chambers were for me alone.
His sandeled feet and robed physique
Bore sharp contrast to my lavish decor.
He stood beside my oaken desk,
Hand-crafted by a cunning artisan,
Saying nothing-yet, I knew.

“You have come, “ I said, “For my report.
I will tell you--I have won
I have succeeded where my youth has failed
Have called the demon cataract my own
Conquered, subdued, mastered it for you.”

His face was hard, unmoved.
“Sit down and I shall tell you,” I proclaimed.
He stood, “I shall tell you anyway.
They let him die you know.
My youth who fought so bravely for the sun,
They cut him and they let him bleed and die,
When but a word could have salvaged
His fainting heart.
It was those whom I called neighbors;
The enemy was there in each of them,
Power and hatred, wealth and lust,
They all were there, they and fear.
The worst was fear, for she above all
Restrained my healing hand;
But I have met them all and conquered.”

The prophet stood.
“Listen,” I continued, anxious to relate,
“They thought me one of them thereafter,
Selfish, profit-seeking--but I was not;
I did not abandon my youth’s noble cause;
Thou the substance of his dulled sword and dented
shield
Lies buried in the sand with his remains
Their essence hangs within my heart, even today.
Oh, I pretended to be one of them,
But only to take them off their guard
While I plotted in the dark
To fill his righteous cause.
I reviewed his fatal errors and learned
He was too careless, too bold in open confrontation.
Thou good of heart, he lacked in cunning;
Evil must be beat on its own terms
Wealth for wealth and power for power
We must play their foolish game,

Gaining gold and might to further righteous causes;
Careful as the poison vipers must we be,
Yet harmless to the blameless as the dove.”

The prophet stood.

“Likewise, I swore revenge on hate,
I stored my gall and swelled my spleen,
Filled my heart with secret plots;
Then slit him in the silent alley,
A fitting end for his hissing throat.
No more would hatred murder brother,
His death freed the shackles of many.”

Next, I learned the lawyer ways of greed
Whose calculator heart tightly cinched
The contracts of widows and orphans,
Turning their hungry faces to the street
To lick the dust with naked feet.
Him, I bound with contracts strong,
Foreclosed his shrewd and subtle plots,
Thrusting him shirtless to the open street,
His wife and children beg the roadways,
No more will he break others,
Leave them hungry or homeless.”

“Lust, she was a pretty one,
Who almost tempted my forbearance.
She was drawn to my wealth and power,
So, I feigned my love and wed her body,
Took my passion’s fill of her secret pleasures,
Then left her ravished for another.
Cold and lonely she drank a poison draught,
Never more to falsely draw the innocent
To empty, lonely death.

“Fear was the trickiest of all--
Her ways were difficult to taste,
But I partook and savoring their might,
I hedged her in on every side,
Became her darkest shadow,
Haunting her nights, terrorizing her days,

Until she trembled deep and fled,
No more to cause to frighten and to flee.
Thus, I am victor over all.

My youth failed in his idealist hope,
His innocent faith in right conquering evil
Was false and vain,
But I, with maturity and craft have taken the victory
Securing to myself the spoils of evil.”
With Satan’s spoils, power and wealth,
I am ready to carve the trail to the promised land,
To make a haven for the innocent faith of youth.
God has granted me power and wealth and strength
Which I gladly place in your hands,
That me may halt the raging torrent’s plunge
And climb the path unto the mountain sun.
This is my report--I am ready, fit for service.”

The prophet stood with silent sorry eyes
Then Turned to leave.
“Where are you going? I told you I am ready,
The final battle is ours,
Just waiting for my power and wealth
To turn the tide and grant us final victory.”

He closed my mirrored door
And left me standing face to face
With power and wealth and hate and lust and...
Struck with terror I trembled deep and fled.

The Birth of Life

I paused to wipe the summer sweat from brow,
Re-shouldered my heavy burden,
And pressing forward,
Attained the familiar cottage at wood’s edge.
The widow woman met me at the porch,
Dropped to my sandled feet and plead,
“Oh, gentle sir, praise heaven you have come.
My only son was stricken sore by thieving knives;

I found him bleeding--washed his wounds
Pouring my meager oil and wine into his care,
Bound him, nursed him through his feverish days
'Til life burned brightly in his eyes again;
Yet I fear the fever hath set him mad;
Today he takes his fathers sword and shield
And quests to fight the dragon evils of the world.
Too young, he surely is good as slain.
Oh, kind prophet, you have helped us before,
Help us again, heal him of this madness,
Cast out the demon that vexes him so."

Lifting her with comfort's hand,
We stepped across the broken threshold,
Met the boy with sword in hand,
Shield and pack flung over broad shoulders;
A handsome youth, with blazing eyes,
A silent fire in them...familiar.
I blocked his path, Questioned his intent.

"I go," He said, "To fight the evil world
That sweeps humanity headlong to eternal fire.
The den of thieves lies waiting to be purged,
Pleading cries of poverty reach heaven;
The blood of martyrs waits for vengeance;
There is none to plead the cause of justice.
Our thoughtless elders fear the fray,
They hide behind their practical, feigned wisdom;
Thus falls to youth the dream of freedom,
We take the sword and met the gruesome task
Of cutting bloody path unto the promised day.
God in His mercy has spared my breath
And I must pay Him with my faithful service
Therefore stand aside old one
For I commence a holy quest."

His mother wept, sounding protest,
"My son, go not into this fatal fray,
The fever has controlled your brain,
Warped your youthful reason,
You are brave, but innocent,

While the enemy you seek is cunning,
Heartless in power, shrewd in wealth;
He lies lie awake to snare you in darkest night
To fell you with a single silent stroke.
You must work here, in patience,
Only when greater might and substance is yours,
Can any hope for victory be found.”

“Bid not me stay, dearest mother,
Neither fear my safety in this fight
For God will be my battle strength;
His outstretched arm is bared against the wicked,
His hot breath slays them like a blast.
His servants he abandons not,
but lifts them as on eagle’s wings,
His David’s slay the giant evils
With faith their only shield.
God witnesseth the justice of my war;
And will not fail me in this noble cause.”

“Only if your words were true , my son!
But I have seen the cunning ways of men,
And the innocent are victim of their snares.
Their lies are smooth and clever,
Deceit is locked within their iron hearts,
Velvet and lace mask their thoughts,
their guile will befriend your cause,
Even as they plot to slit your sleeping throat.”

“Fear not, for God has granted me His sharp
And two-edged sword of truth
To penetrate their stony deception.
this instrument of their demise
Shines above the brightness of the noon-day sun;
Blind their evil eyes it will,
Cut out their foul lying tongues
And piercing the hardness of their hearts,
It shall thrust them to the eternal pit.
Truth will serve to avenge the fatherless,
God will see the wicked thrust to hell
The righteous exalted in peace.”

“And what of love?” I asked breaking silence.

“Love is lost, my gentle, but naive prophet
Where power and wealth lord over all
Where lust and hate enslave the mass of men,
Fear’s flood engulfs both wicked and righteous.
Where is light for love in such a darkness?
Love suffers while the oppressor reigns,
Though I thought I rested safe
The evil broke through and wounded.
Evil must be killed that love may flourish,
That is my quest--to make the world fit for love.
Had you courage you would shed that silly robe,
Take sword and shield, fight beside me,
That we might break forever the backbone of evil.
But you, like all the others, shun the fight,
And I have patience no more for talk.
Each moment a new device of man
Brings misery upon his fellows.
Waste time no more in worthless speech,
Even now, another widow is driven from her home,
A child is abandoned without sustenance,
And man enslaves his brother with the whip.
Stand aside and hinder me no more
The battle waits and God calls unto me.”

Still, I held his arm with firm grip,
Meeting his eye most carefully:
“Listen, youth , and listen well,
And I will tell you of my story
Then free you are to go--if go you must
But first, you must listen to an old one’s tale,
The ravings of a madman like yourself.
In my day I have sought the fray,
I felt the same hot-blooded indignation,
Righteous wrath at each injustice,
And raising my own sword and shield
I fought open and bold,
But only bled and died,
Victim of the world’s bitter slashes;

Then fought again, the lesson yet unlearned,
Shrewd and cunning for this next round,
Yet merely spread that which I abhorred.
My fighting quest was vain and foolish
For I knew not the face of my enemy.
But I met his finally, before the mirror,
And understanding at last the well-spring of evil,
I fled in anguish to the river cliffs
To fling myself to raging, white capped death,
For even yet the desire to destroy
Burned like a hungry furnace in my breast.
I would yet be conqueror of these my enemies...
The icy waters slapped and stung
Like a thousand bees, and bitter...
Bitter I sank into the cold of that chill water,,
Yet as I died that day there came a holy fire
Burning like the desert sun
It melted me until my sweat,,
Dripped blood-red from my every pore,
Then liquid I was poured anew,
And slipping past those wet and burning gates
Found myself alive upon the river shore.
Evil died that day, But the victory was not mine--
Washed and purged, freed from dark desires,
I found the victory already won
By He who bowed beneath all things,
The Least of all made Greatest.”

The youth looked up with puzzled eyes.
“Your words are meaningless, prophet,
How can you speak of victory
When evil is everywhere with us.
If we take not the sword of truth and fight
Surely we will be wept away in its awesome power.”

“More surely will it sweep should we resist,
Truth is God’s sword,
Dangerous for mortal man to wield;
Well you have spoken of its two-edged blade,
One to strike your enemy to dust,
The other to thrust your own heart, deep and hard,

And leave you slain beside your darkest foe.
Lift such a sword in defense alone
To guard against the path of liars.

For offense choose a gentler weapon,
Love, blunt and harmless, heals not slays,
Blinds the wounds of the power crushed,
Deals bread to those cut down by wealth,
Blesses the heart burn-scarred from lust,
And softens the shell of hate-filled hearts.
Even the mighty fear flees before its gentle power
Leaving faith and virtue in its wake.
Accuse me not of fear, child, fear is conquered,
And even now I rest within the promised land.”

“Stranger, your eyes burn with unknown flame
While your words pierce the heart like a lance,
Almost I would believe you,
And yet, if you have conquered fear
Why are you afraid to fight?
Your actions only bind the victim
They protect not the innocent from death.
If your faith is great,
Then turn upstream with me to battle.
Will not the righteous rally to our cause?
Can we not with Heaven’s mighty power win?
Let us therefore fight...”

“And lose...my brave and valiant youth .
You are idealistic but I know the Ideal,
Life is not gained with swords and spears,
Heaven casts no man to hell,
But rather weeps for every wicked soul
Who binds his heart to death instead of life,
Hate cannot avenge the victims of hate,
A damned soul only enlarges hell.
Leave the wicked to slay each other,
Battle not against the cataract of death,
Depart, instead, for the untrod shores of life,
And from the banks send call for all to follow.
If quest you must,

Then a righteous quest kneels at your feet,
Build here a better home for your good mother
That she may have shelter in her aging years.
Plant crops, raise sheep, that food and cloth
May be yours to deal to the naked and hungry.
Thusly shall you gain your victory,
Or rather you shall learn the truth,
The victory is ours already--
For hate and greed, lust and fear,
Even death and hell are overcome,
Destroyed by the gentlest of Lambs,
There is no need to battle for the promised land,
Even now, the meek inherit it.”

He set his pack upon the floor,
And dropped his sword to fight no more

I left him thus to carry on,
And taking up my burden, lighter,
I passed away into death's dawn.