

Portraits
And
Reflections
Revised Edition

by
Steve Sweeney

Portraits and Reflections Revised Edition
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A special thanks to my brother for helping me put this together. Thanks Joe.

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(Introduction)

Life happens

There is pain and sorrow

Comfort and joy

Some things beautiful, some things ugly

We feel we act, we react,

We lay down exhausted, we sit and cry, and sometimes
we dance

But all the while it keeps happening

When good things happen, we feel good

When bad things happen we feel bad

Much of our lives are spent trying to find the good and
avoid the bad

Sometimes we are seeking to understand

And sometimes we can only reflect

These are some of my reflections

Words paint pictures in our minds

Of people, places, and things, we feel and experience.

This is my Gallery

Positive Reflections
Positive Reflections

(Positive Reflections)

Portraits and Reflections

Seasons Of Love and Life

When my love blooms, new,
Tender and graceful as spring,
My heart beats quickly, I am a child.
I feel the youthful energy within,
And life is rich.

When my love is strong and sure,
Like the summer sun high and strong.
Secure is the warmth that surrounds me.
Radiant earth, radiant heart, I am young.
Steady are my feet on the ground.

When fall slips in with sorrow masked in brilliance,
The sun is strong but not as long,
Like a fleeting glance.
My love struggles between hanging on,
And the letting go.
As much as life is change, love does reflect,
Sometimes the thunder, sometimes the river,
And sometimes the thread.
I am mature.

When winter freezes my love runs deep,
Beneath the cold surface and across the distance
To warm my heart and see me through,
A lamplight in a window on a cold snowy night.

Positive Reflections

My hair is white and my eyes are crystal blue,
Like the waters of spring, that were,
And are yet to be,
Am I old?

Portraits and Reflections

Spring, Birth, Being, and Beginning

It was morning in May
The rain fell gently throughout the night
The mist softened the light and the sky was gray

Against the stark nakedness of the trees frame
Buds long closed have begun to open
From within life awakens

Leaves tiny and frail reach out to touch the air
Rich in color and life, but tender in form
From this weakness comes the strength of the mature
tree

I feel an identity
This energy is my energy
This frailty is my frailty

I embrace this beauty in the tree
And yet I deny and fear this weakness in me
What is this mystery?
Is this life's riddle?

Can I find my strength through embracing my
weakness?
Is this the bridge that you and I must cross to find
ourselves?
I ask the question and yet I know
For the tiny frail life in me says that it is so.

The Artist (Doris)

This eye that I am
This eye that is me

Love is a window,
Through which I see,
I feel,
I relate,
My eyes open and I open,
I breathe,
I feel the sights I see,
I experience the light and color and dark,
The energy of what I see fills me,
And resonates within me,
Like the invisible vibration of sound,
That fills and flows through a musical instrument,
Streams of sunlight like strings of a guitar,
Enrich the color of my vision,
My heart dances with delight,
My spirit soars on wing through treetops high,
May I never draw that curtain or pull that shade,
For by the measure that that window is obscured,
So also my life is diminished

Portraits and Reflections

A Casual Pondering

It was that kind of a day, you know?
Blissfully serene and all.
But the wind spoke to me of the changes,
That were to come, you know?
I could smell it.
I can't describe it, but I've smelled it a hundred times
before,
Kind of clean, kind of fresh,
Kind of like old damp leaves on the ground and turning
them over after they've been there awhile.
Or like the air was from somewhere else,
Like a far off land or something,
And it blew through miles of forests, streams, and
ponds,
And now here it is.
So anyway,
I feel this longing, like I want to go with the wind,
Cause it didn't come all this way just to stop here.
I wanted to see the changes it spoke to me of,
That I felt inside, like a happy sorrow,
Like a child growing up,
Sadly leaving the past, but joyfully embracing the
future,
That kind of change, you know? That kind of feeling.
I love the changes.
Sometimes they go bad, but then they come around
good.

Positive Reflections

I don't want the changes to leave me behind.

I want to ride that wind, like a leaf cascading down a
steam,

Not a rock embedded in the ground, that the stream
leaves behind,

Like an old friend,

I want to change with the changes,

You know what I mean?

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Time

Time,
Like water dripping from the faucet,
Through the night of years,
Old pipes, faucets streaked with tears,
Time seeps,
Like water through the cracks,
Of pavement worn from feet tired and pacing,

Time shapes diamonds,
And breaks hearts,
Time softens petals on flowers,
Breaking through rocks glistening with dew,

Time hangs thick and heavy,
Like storm clouds brewing,
Time races, like rain pouring down,
Soaking the soul,
Time, moving too fast, confuses the mind,

Time rushes, like water flooding,
Washing away what was today,
Beyond our reach, from now to past,
Time spent is vapor in clouds,
That drift beyond,
Our horizons.

Hold Me

Hold me

Let me know that you are there

That you care

Hold me close

But not so close that I don't have room to be me

Give me space

But not so much space that I can't reach you when I
need you

I want to need you

But not so much that I can't stand on my own

When I don't need you I want you

I want always that you want me

As I always want you

I want you to need me

And I will be there when you do

But don't need me so much that you can't be you
without me

And I will give you space to be you

I want you to be all of you, not just what I have room for

Or feel comfortable with

I want to give you space

But not so much that you can't reach me

I will be there for you

That you know that I care for you

I will hold you.

Portraits and Reflections

SPACES

Spaces make the world, and all that is.

The spaces between the tines make the rake.

The necessary nothing that maintains the boundaries of
what is.

Spaces between the spokes make the wheel.

Spaces between the leaves add to the fullness of the
tree.

Spaces between each of us,

Keep us reaching,

One for the other.

Monument

If a monument were to be built in remembrance of me, I would want it to have the appearance of a raindrop.

Why a raindrop?

A raindrop is a sign of life. A raindrop nourishes as I am given the opportunity to nourish the people in my environments. A raindrop looks like a teardrop. Tears aren't bad. They can be tears of joy or tears of sorrow. Sorrow is a result of great love. How can one not know great love and say that they have lived.

The shape of a raindrop is blunt on one end and pointed on the other. We have to be like that with others sometimes. Its shape is not fixed, though; it can be flexible and change. We need to be flexible and change sometimes, and sometimes often. When a raindrop hits the surface of a pond there is an immediate impact, but there is also the rings that subtly reach out and touch the shores. I want to have that dynamic impact on those around me. I also want to in a subtle way be a catalyst for change in the lives of others.

As soft as a raindrop is when it impacts a rigid object it stays a raindrop. However when a raindrop lands on an open or porous surface it allows itself to be absorbed, it becomes one with the environment, and adds value to it.

Remember the rain and remember the raindrop.
Remember me; maybe I was one that touched you.

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Remember Me

How precious a gift

How rare the moment

When a face from the past says Hey I remember you

Hundreds pass with a brief Hi, How Ya doin?

Not stopping long enough to hear.

When you walk out of your way and single me out

And ask How Are you doing? And wait for the reply

The inquiring eyes and the silence

Your attention is a gift.

I am valued in that moment of your time.

Leaves

Each tiny leaf carries the torch of life,
But briefly,
Then fades from sight,
Back into the ground,
And another takes its place.

With each leaf that unfurls,
The tree breathes in life.
And as it exhales,
The leaf falls.

Portraits and Reflections

A Tree

Standing quiet and tall,
Proud, patient,
Diligent and determined,
A living testament to time,

Strong, aged branches, encircle, shade and protect,
A sacred circle of ground for nesting,
And resting,
For seedlings, and underlings,
And now, in this moment for me,

I sit nestled and protected in the arms of a gentle giant
At the foot of a monument to history,
I think of hiding, and secret places,
Pockets for things, and children's smiling faces,
These are the treasures held quietly in my heart,
Memories of moments past and seeds of future
pleasures,

This shaded place that I rest in beneath this tree,
Is a moment in time this guardian has given me.

The Promise (Isaac)

The leaves change and fall,
And I fear they won't return,
When your love turns cold,
Like winter,
Will my heart, like the sun,
Be enough to bring back the spring
The earth moves,
And the seasons change,
Can it move again for us?

The seed buried deep within carries with it,
The hope for the future,
When all hope appears lost,
Even distant,
Will the sun again warm the earth,
Will the seed respond and fulfill,
The promise

Portraits and Reflections

Hugs

To be held in your words is acknowledgement and validation. I am that I am.

To be held in your heart is comfort in knowing I am not alone. My pain cannot consume me because there's someone else who cares.

To be held in your eyes is to see you seeing me. I am not invisible. You confirm the identity I know to be me.

To be held in your arms would be warmth and acceptance, Sunshine that bathes me and the comfort of a warm blanket on a rainy day.

Choice

Excellence, Mastery, and attention to detail,
These are the raiment of those of nobler spirit.
A wealth of riches, and power, and all things fancied
Are the raiment of kings and queens.
Honor is bought, trust is traded, and sincerity can be a
sometime thing.
Though armies invade and kings and queens may fall,
Those of nobler spirit prevail,
For their treasures cannot be stolen.
Do not labor at your work, but rather uncover the
beauty in what you do.
Excellence, mastery, and attention to detail,
These are the raiment of those of nobler spirit.
Yea, we are not without!
Choice is our power.
Sincerity is our staff,
Self-respect our royal cloak.
Choose this day and accept your crown,
Which is rightfully yours,
And no other can wear.
Though simple am I, and of little consequence,
I have done my best work today.
I have loved thee,
I have loved this life,
And I have loved the work that was presented to me
this day
In so doing I have earned my crown.

Portraits and Reflections

To My Son

Congratulations, you made it. Welcome to manhood. I'm proud of you. Yes, I know you have been here for a while, but I would like to share a few things I have learned about being a man. So here's the thing. A Real man, that is any man worth his weight, is as much a mule as he is a man. When you're a man among other men it is about carrying your fair share of the burden. In all other situations it is all about carrying as much as you can even if it is the "lion's share."

You always have to take care of her, even if she doesn't take care of you. If she doesn't take care of you, you will feel sadness. If you don't take care of her you will feel sadness and guilt. Guilt is heavier than sadness and the two together are more weight than any man or mule can bear.

So you ask, "When is my time?" Really good men have been asking that question for generations. A mule's time is the end of the day when the weight is taken off his back for a night. He can eat hay and watch the sun go down. Or hang around the watering trough with other mules and commiserate.

My Time is once a week when I have coffee with Roger and we share stories of the weight we carry and the roads we travel. My time is at the end of the week when I get home, a half hour before I go to bed. The week is done and I can rest for a moment before the weekend and a change of work. Roger says that a break is just a change of work.

Positive Reflections

You used to exercise a lot and you probably still do. My guess is you do the hard work because the reward you get is how good you feel when it is done. A ten mile hike won't kill you. Not knowing why you are doing it or not wanting to may kill your spirit. Life is about struggle. If we didn't have to struggle we would all get fat, lazy, sick, and stupid. The good men accept the struggle. The not so good men take the other road.

If you look at the weather for a year, there aren't too many perfect days. Either it is too hot or too cold, too wet or too windy. My time is the occasional day when the wind stops blowing, it's warm and I am caught up enough on my work to take a break. When I do take a break I think about my kids. Every man wants to experience some form of greatness in his life, but there is nothing better than seeing greatness in your children. I see greatness in you.

My time is when I can sit down with my family and have a healthy hearty meal that I didn't have to cook and share conversation with people that I am a part of. Your Mother makes the best chicken salad in the world and every once in a while she makes it just for me. My time is Christmas or a Birthday, when someone I care about remembers me. The best gifts are the ones that only someone who has taken time to know you can give. My time is when my children come to me for advice instead of money. I'll always try to help them with money, but when they ask me for advice they acknowledge and respect me. My time is when I see you and your brothers and your sister and I see the people you have

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become. I think you are better than me and I feel good about that.

George Patton said, "All glory is fleeting." There are brief moments in life when one battle is over, and it's before the next begins that you can pause and reflect. Your times and your moments will come. The trick is recognizing them and keeping in mind that the end of the race is worth the running. It's about the good feeling you get that you didn't take the easy way out or quit before the race is over.

Okay, I am sorry this doesn't sound too cheerful, but I guess the goal isn't to cheer you up. The goal is to throw you a rope, a sturdy one that you can hold onto for a long time. I believe in you and I believe you have what it takes.

Love, Dad

To My Daughter

When you and Ben got married I meant to write something for you. I got too busy and didn't get around to it. Now it is time.

I am pleased that you feel comfortable calling me Dad. I can only hope that you are as comfortable with me giving Fatherly advice. That's part of what Dads do. So anyway I wanted to share with you some of my thoughts and reflections on Love, Life, and relationships.

Relationships are about control and the lack of it. In good relationships two people share control or take turns, each having self-control and none being out of control. Relationships are about change. No change and they become stagnate. Too much change and you have friction, static, and insecurity. Relationships are about growth. If you are not growing then you are dying that is a fact of life. Two people will grow at different times and at different rates. The result is kind of rubber band effect, stretching and pulling, Hopefully always pulling each other up and not back.

Relationships are about space. Not enough space and you suffocate. Too much space and you drift apart. Relationships have to have rules, whether spoken or unspoken. If you break the rules you break the relationship. Both parties have to agree to and abide by the rules. There will be disagreements and fights. There has to be rules about fighting. The one you love the most you can hurt the most. You can only hurt someone

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who is vulnerable. You cannot be truly close if you are not vulnerable with each other. Sometimes you have to fight to release tension or resolve problems. Be very careful fighting with someone who is vulnerable. "No hitting below the belt." It's a good rule. There has to be things that are off limits. Both parties have to agree to a fight or argument and with that both parties have to agree that there has to be an end or resolution to a fight or argument. Be careful about walking away. If things are too overheated than walking away is good, but if they're not and one person walks away too quick there is potential for more harm. An untreated wound will bleed or get infected.

Relationships are about Love and tolerance and patience. The strongest love is the tolerant, patient, sometimes painful kind, It holds on to the bitter end and beyond. The falling in love kind is powerful at first but fades. The other kind starts slow and builds. Keep your balance, the one who loves the most can get hurt the most. This doesn't mean one should love less. If you lose your balance and stop moving you will surely fall. Don't stop moving, move more. So also you should love more. Sharing in love and burdens is not 50/50. Measuring makes a mess. Both people should be doing 75%. Each should always try to outdo the other. Each should be willing to sacrifice almost anything for the other. WILLING and ALMOST are key words here. Some people sacrifice but aren't really willing and the leads to resentment. Resentment is a stubborn stain that is hard to wash out of your soul. I say almost because if you sacrifice all that you have and all that you are than there is no more you. If there is no more you than there can be no relationship.

The one who loves the least has the power in the relationship. This cannot work. Power in a relationship is the beginning of the end of it. In some bad relationships the man has all the power because the good woman will give her all for him. In other bad relationships the woman has the power because a good man will give all that he has and all that he is for her. In a good relationship each does all that he or she can for the other.

Men are funny creatures, they like to feel powerful and strong and take on the world, but always there is a little boy inside them that wants to be held and nurtured. If you always take time to hold and nurture him he will always be there for you. Good men are like mules. If you feed them and take care of them they will carry your burdens all day long. Sorry to sound so crude.

I know that you are a good woman because Ben told me so. I tell you that Ben is a good man and he will always be there for you. He will always try to do more for you than you do for him. And that is the wonderful, beautiful thing in a good relationship.

Love, Dad

PEOPLE

People

People

People People People
People People People
People People People

People

People

pEOPLE

(People)

Portraits and Reflections

This Sun, My God, and John

Here again I stand,
Amidst the cold blistery chill of winter,
Like a tree frozen in the icy white field.
The air controls the land,
Slowly the cold invaded,
Life disappeared,
Withdrawn,
Hidden from the surface,
This Sun, Rose, this day,
As it has every other day,
It's rays seeming of no effect against the cold.
The light penetrates,
But most of the heat is blocked out,
A movement on a branch,
A droplet of water falls,
A sign that the sun has reached in.
This Sun, That returns, this day, and the next,
Again and again,
Each day another minute of sunshine,
Breaking through, melting the ice.
The rock in the field feels warm,
And the bark on the tree has softened,
The ground beneath is no longer hard.
This day, This Sun, Has reached me.
I feel the warmth in my cheeks,
Hope is restored in my heart,

Spring is not gone,
It's just another gentle ray of sunshine
Away from, This Sun

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Marilyn

Marilyn paints her landscape
With colors, yellow, orange, and violet
Greens and blues and today a splash of red
It is a perpetual canvas she paints
With laughter and delight
A living landscape
I think a flowering fruit tree would look good here
I'll paint it the way I like
And if I don't like it I will change it
Today we'll go to market to get some special paint
There's one spot that needs a little something

Marilyn lives on the top of the hill
In the field where the wind blows
Her canvas is alive with every manner of creature
Birds busy nesting, hummingbirds dance and drink
nectar
There are no orphans here, all are welcome
A sanctuary or perhaps a wildlife soup kitchen
Jonathan is here for his muffin
He perches on the peak
The mare is on the edge of the field anticipating a carrot
The fox need not be sly
Geese fly in for a rest stop and talk about their journey
Today we will bake some bread and cookies for the
workman
All are nourished and the landscape is enriched.

Edward

The spruce tree grows stately

One needle at a time

Line upon line

The architect plans

Walls and fences, shapes and contours

Similarities and contrasts

The pieces of the next dream are sorted and organized

A place for everything and everything in its place

Readiness

The thinker, the dreamer, the planner

He peddles up one hill and coasts down the next

Planning all the way

An anecdote, a belly laugh

The storyteller adds life to words

The wise man remembers

And the friend shares

Living is the story

Portraits and Reflections

Water People

The ground opened up and brought forth a spring.
Pure, cool, clear, fresh water trickling down the slope,
Sparkling in the sun, dancing over rocks.

Picking up twigs and tossing them playfully about.
Further down it travels, uniting with other springs.
Gathering clouds spill out old water made new.

The rain spreads out, seeks and finds its way,
Through the nooks and crannies to join the spring
Much more of the rain finds a resting-place in the
ground.

The water travels far gathering strength and direction.
Youthfulness abounds, as brooks become streams.
Streams press on and mature into rivers.

Rivers meander carelessly at times into ponds and lakes
of content.

Other rivers rage wildly, tearing and carving the
landscape,

Boldly blazing a trail toward destiny.

Ahead, the ocean, the great oneness, all waters mold
into one great mass.

Water, the lifeblood of the earth, catalyst of life,
The one mutual ingredient shared by all.

The River

I am that river,
Young and wild I tear up all in my path, I rage
Reckless, without direction,
Not care free but certainly not caring and yet not
 meaning to be uncaring,
Frantically searching and lacking meaning,
What purpose have I?
I am that river and yet I thirst,
Impulsively pushing and pulling shifting this way and
 that,
Sometimes I have power worth harnessing and
 sometimes I'm dammed.
I take the hard road always looking for the easy way,
I dash and fall and suddenly I slow to a crawl,
Slower and deeper,
Muddy and murky, darker,
I become heavy and weighted down, I stagnate,
Fish and frog and all creeping things occupy me like
 ideas of permanence,
And belonging,
For a while I am apart of what's going on,
I'm a part of it or it is a part of me, but it is not me,
I must change and move on.
Older and worn, more quietly I move,
Visibly changed it is not as easy to see through me,
Within in me I carry the soil and dirt of places I have
 been,

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Toward the coast and an ocean,

And what? To be diluted, absorbed and disappear?

Or cleansed?

Will I know if or when I get there?

I am that river.

The Wood Chopper

If the wood were a ball and my mall a bat,
I would be a mighty fine baseball player.
Of course that is not the case,
So I will continue to split my wood,
As I have for many years.

I will never see my face on a card,
Or have fans begging my autograph.
Certainly crowds will not cheer,
As I step up to my chopping block.

Even so, I feel no remorse,
My sport has its rewards.

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The Lighthouse (Mother)

Upon this rock I was built,
Beneath this wing I was sheltered,
With great pain you nurtured me,
You have sacrificed yourself,
With the patience to stand alone at times,
Against the storms,
You have given me my chance,
You have given me your recipe,
I can change it to my liking,
But it was yours,
I could not have had a beginning,
If you had not given it to me,
And now in silence you step aside,
In hopeful anticipation you wait,
As I stand before you,
On my own,
But not without you,
As I set out to sea,
You are the homeport of assurance, and the lighthouse,
A guiding light to help me steer by,
Though the desire is my own,
I fly because you gave me the wings,
I am because you desired,
My best efforts reflect only the least,
That you have done for me,
Thank you.

The Stranger in the Mist

The pounding noise that seemed to go on forever has
stopped.

All is quiet, deathly quiet.

The last flames flicker out.

Smoke drifts across the landscape.

The sky is thick with tired gray clouds.

As the smoke lifts, my eyes scan the valley.

Bodies that once beat fervently for the cause,

Now lie scattered and broken on the countryside.

The battle is over and I alone remain.

They died nobly for the cause, each for their own cause.

What was that cause?

Momentarily my thoughts are frozen as I catch a
glimpse of movement.

Far off in the distance a man stands.

He pauses briefly, and then proceeds slowly toward me.

So it is he and I that remain. Is it up to us to finish this
war?

As this man walks toward me I notice that he does not
look like a man going into battle.

No, this war is over,

And I will now meet face to face this stranger from the
other side

He is closer now; I can just barely make out his features.

A strange feeling comes over me; I sense that I know
this person,

Yet he is a stranger to me.

Yes, I do know this person.

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This was my brother before the war.

I sense his awareness of this.

The war, what was the war? It was not my war, and it
was not his war.

The war existed before each of us.

I was born on this side and he on the other.

We are both merely casualties of a war that was not our
own.

We did not choose it, but we learned it well.

Now this end is our beginning.

A Great Ship (Charlie)

A ship lies sleeping in the harbor.

Weathered floorboards, an occasional creak, an echo of
the years.

Tiredness prevails.

He's merely a shadow now. Just another obstacle,
As today flies by in its busy bustling, seemingly
purposeful suddenness.

He was their lifeline; they depended on him for life.

His back strained proudly under the weight of their
staples and demands.

Today doesn't need him, or maybe they have forgotten.

Have you forgotten?

You are gallant, a portrait of another time.

A monument of grace and majesty that steel and plastic
cannot replace. A ton of steel and bolts cannot
be gallant. What is poured of plastic cannot be
majestic.

Your beams are hewn of the finest timber, cultivated
over many years. Loving hands finely shaped
your bow with the greatest of care. You are a
vessel of dreams in a world of necessity.

Today a new wind blows for you. Lift your sail once
more.

Let the breeze fill once again your sails in their
blossoming beauty.

You have caused them to remember.

Your enduring determination prevails against the tide.

Now more than ever you stand apart from the rest.

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Oceans once conquered,

Have now become your playground.

One Memory of My Father

In the quiet still of the morning,
Sitting motionless, dark eyes probing,
Absorbing the light of the day,
What thoughts are these you entertain,
Gazing intently out the window?
A hand moves with deliberate precision,
An ash drops in the tray,
The breeze rustles the leaves outside,
A squirrel scampers into view,
He stops and stares momentarily,
Motionless,
With black eyes, dark, bottomless pools gazing,
Time stops briefly,
The window has become a mirror,
The clock ticks slowly,
My own breathing seems loud and out of place,
I retreat, lest I become a stone tossed,
In this pond of stillness you have made

Portraits and Reflections

The Willow (To Ruth)

Down the way, amidst the pines,
Set apart by her own gracefulness,
Stands my friend the willow.

Adorned with flowing leaves of pastel green.
Each tiny leaf a little piece of life, of laughter,
An occasional tear, a bit of a memory.

The breeze dances through her limbs, whispering
secrets of life.

The wind takes a limb away and she replaces it with
three more.

A flowing symbol of the life within and without.

All about her the breeze is cool and fresh.

I breathe in the freshness and relax.

The harshness of the midday sun cannot penetrate
here.

Peace, rest, regeneration, relaxation, peace of mind,

These I have found in your presence, my friend.

As long as you allow I shall come again to your restful
place.

With me I bring my respect and admiration, and a hope,

That your beauty will be preserved forever,

That others may appreciate you as I have.

Wherever I go I will take a piece of you with me.

A seed here and there and perhaps one day another
willow,

Not weeping, but rejoicing,

And not to replace you,

For what mother is robbed when her children reach
maturity?

Though a willow I am not, in my dreams I hope,
That one day I can reach the sky,
Feel the sweet kiss of the morning dew,
And embrace life with the grace that you do.

Portraits and Reflections

A Friend (Gerry)

Without knowing you, I have chosen you,
What I have desired for myself,
You have also desired,
Let me walk with you, and you with me,
Set apart, yet close by,

We fought in different battles,
But our hearts have known the same pain,
Though of different flesh, Our Father is One,
He has given me a brother,
Someone who can know my heart,
And where I've been,

From the darkness of the past,
From the shadows of isolation,
Two men, two lives,
Two hearts crying out to one God,
This is my brother.

My Child

He awakens

And opens his eyes

Wide with wonder

Immediately he begins

Soaking up the world around him

This is the day

And this is how it is

Let's play

Portraits and Reflections

No?

No!

The sound was mildly stern,
Yet I could see some reservation in his eyes,
As he cast a glance back at me,
His eyebrows wrinkled as he paused briefly,
To see what came next,
He really didn't understand NO,
To his innocent mind it meant daddy,
Questioned what he was doing
At that moment getting into the refrigerator,
Was very important,
Something he was just supposed to do.

A is for Apple, B is for.....

Brian

The first seed

Cast in rocky soil

A windswept and bitter terrain

From dirt, and rocks, sun, and snow, and rain to...

A bent and crooked path forged by curiosity,

followed by determination

in search of...

Knowledge, mystery, treasure, experience.

He is the path that he forges, through the tangled
wood.

A rocky path,

an uneasy journey.

A tree of old and worn appearance,

Branches turning, twisting, reaching...

For space, for light, for opportunity, for experience.

The wood tightly twisted, knotted, un-split-able,
indivisible, unyielding.

Defiant and determined he weathers the seasons

Spring rain is quiet laughter, a muse,

a half smile buds, and breaks forth

In blossoms of laughter, rich full fragrant blossoms

Petals rain down like warm soft snow, whispering
assurance

Portraits and Reflections

And branches are outstretched hands bearing fruit
The fruit is raw experience translated into wisdom,
To nourish

Aaron

Aaron is
As arrows are
Straight and true
Sharp and to the point
Light and soft as a feather
Rigid and unbending
Graceful strength, an eagle in flight
With precision
And
An
Eye
That's
True
He
Strikes
His
Target
Poised
In
The
Bow
He
Expresses
Quiet
Anticipation
Of a flight

Portraits and Reflections

He will
Soar high
And far

Benjamin

My son Benjamin is special because,

He is a loving energy force that will greatly impact this
world in a positive way.

He is independent and has the strength of character to
stand alone in his beliefs.

Benjamin has unparalleled intensity.

His strength is gentle and his gentleness is strong.

He has balance and depth.

He is the resounding bass that keeps the band marching
and vibrates within our being.

He is a gift of God and within him is the essence of God.

Portraits and Reflections

Eli

Eli is as a dragonfly.

Whirling, buzzing always in motion.

Wild in his dance he flies from this leaf to that flower,

And skips across the water.

He hits it several times just to be sure,

Extra wings and extra energy.

For a moment he stops slowly fanning his wings.

His eyes wide, focused,

Intent, calm as though sleep were imminent.

Then off again he darts.

Busy and purposeful is he.

Have you ever caught a dragonfly?

What do they do,

I wonder?

If you wait long enough he will come to you,

But he won't stay long.

There's too much to do.

Fly Eli fly.

I love to sit and watch your dance of flight.

Jillian

Jillian is many birds...

A swan she moves quietly, gracefully, assuredly on the
water,

Poised, large eyes absorbing, wise in her gaze.

A song sung from the heart with no pretense,

Laughing softly to herself.

...A hummingbird dancing about fervently

... A blue jay loudly asserting herself

and taunting the neighborhood cats

... The cry of the loon with its morning song

... A mother hen, caring and compassionate busily taking
care of her chicks

... A nesting swallow carefully, meticulously gathering
articles and sculpting her living space.

Jillian is a daisy and a rose,

A carnation and baby's breath.

Jillian is a bouquet of many flowers.

She has many talents and attributes.

Portraits and Reflections

Isaac

Bright eyes, alert, responsive

Little Mr. Isaac has a big heart

Mother's little helper and Daddy's shadow

Cheerful, compassionate, and empathetic

He could be a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher or a clown.

Always alive in thought, feeling and action.

Always a part of what is going on.

Eager to fetch your slippers or newspaper,

Or play a game.

The award for personality and character is Isaac's

He has the stuff that leaders and best friends are made
of.

Hira's Mandala

When all of the sand grains pass through the hour glass

The time is finished

When the last grain of sand is placed in the mandala,

The picture is complete.

What is, is

The confusion lies in how we feel about it.

Shades of Gray

(Shades of Gray)

Portraits and Reflections

I Can Run Faster Than You.

I'll race you to the corner.

I remember that.

I remember when competing wasn't competition, it was
fun.

We took turns winning because the fun was in running
with each other.

We never really knew who would win.

We kind of expected that winning was something you
took turns at and everyone would have a turn
to win.

We only raced with friends because even when you
didn't win, you didn't lose either, and they
couldn't win without you.

In my heart I am still 8, or 10, or 12, and I still want to
run and play, and I still want to win sometimes.

But the rules changed somewhere along the way.

The race isn't as fun, I don't know where the corner is,
and I don't win as often as I used to,

And losing hurts more now.

It feels like nobody wants to come out and play now.

Everyone is grown up, or busy, or something.

I walk along the street and kick rocks, and remember
when you were faster than me.

And I wish we could race to the corner again.

The Changes

Some of the rock eroded off the mountain
From the storm the night before
But from where I stood I didn't notice
The changes
I saw the leaves fall and I watched with wonder,
As they lay upon the cool clear water.
Over the years the leaves fell and sank,
But until the water was dark and still
I didn't see
The changes.
The grass was once plush and green where we walked.
Wild flowers formed a blanket of color.
The ground is bare now save for a few strands of grass,
Struggling to hang on
I don't know how I could not have noticed,
The changes.
We don't talk as much now,
Or maybe we don't listen.
Until you weren't there to hear me,
I didn't feel,
The changes

Portraits and Reflections

The Womb

In the beginning was the void,
Darkness within and without,
In the beginning light shone,
From out of the darkness,
A flicker of the life that was to be,
Swirling clouds of emotion pressed in,
From all about,
Pressing impressions,
Everlasting impressions,
Bit by bit,
Foundations set,
Before time began.

The Mystery of Life

Blinded by my own visions and perceptions,
Pulled this way and that by thoughts and feelings,
Coming to me from out of nowhere,
Glimpses of an ever increasing mystery,
Suspensions of answers to questions unasked,
Questions that present themselves without thought,
Oh to be ignorant, and yet I am
Is partial vision better than no vision at all?
To know or to believe to know, but always doubting
I saw something, I know I did,
But I don't know what,
I think I understand a little bit, but I can't be sure,,
How can I know?
Who is there that can tell me what is real?
And what is not?
Part of my being tells me this is not real,
Yet some part of me knows what is,
Can I believe myself?
If the game is a mystery then you cannot know the
 answers,
Because you would be disqualified,
The object of the game seems to be to discover the
 answers,
Whether by accident or otherwise.
I play the game, but for a moment I see myself playing
 the game,
As if from a distance, And I understand

Portraits and Reflections

It is not over yet

Because I haven't walked the required distance

How far must I go?

The Quest I'm On

Why? Because.

Why is the sky blue?

Okay, I understand that one, but why do I feel the way I
do about the sky being blue? Why are there so
many people?

Where is everyone going? Do they know? Can I know?

Who am I? Why wouldn't I know?

Why do so many people appear to know?

Why is there so much pain and confusion?

If I feel happy and try to hold on to it, will it hurt more if
I lose it?

Why do people get old? Why do people get angry?

Why do they stay angry?

What are clouds made of? Where do they come from?

Do they always exist and just keep circling the earth like
the questions in my head?

Does the sky feel better after it rains or does it just feel
tired?

If you could ask only one question, what would it be?

Did I already ask it?

What one question could I have answered that would
prevent so many questions? Does that one
count?

If you could be granted only one answer what would it
be?

Where the answer is present there is no need for a
question.

Portraits and Reflections

If my whole life is a question and I am given the answer
is there really any need for me?

Are the choices I make a continuation of a question?

Or a selection of an answer? Do I live my own answers?

If so, am I the question? If the question is why am I?

Is the answer then because I am?

Can the answer be the question?

Why?

Because, sometimes the opposite of question is not
answer,

It is acceptance.

Where the Clouds Go

The tall ships have all sailed out of the harbor,
Sorrow quickens my breast,
Dreams once within my grasp,
Drift far out beyond the horizon,
Where the clouds go,

My footsteps feel shorter now, my feet heavier,
The world seems smaller,
And emptier,
The breeze is cooler,
Shivers run up my spine,

Thoughts of shorter days,
And a weakening sun,
I feel as though I may dry up and blow away,
Like the leaves, and the grass,
And the laughter,
That once echoed in the street,
And in this heart,

Hell is not somewhere you go,
It is where you are,
When others have gone,
In search of heaven,
The heaven,
Where the clouds go.

Portraits and Reflections

Solitaire

I win and I lose

But I never really win or lose

I just play

I am not idle or busy

The fall of the cards is unpredictable, but not a surprise

Good or bad

There is security in that the rules are always the same

No moods or feelings or political correctness

There is order and fairness in the random draw of the
cards

Lost

A room plain and square,
Barren, Save for a braided rug,
Warm colors woven in a soft rhythmic pattern,
That radiates the warmth of the care,
With which it was made,
The workmanship and care were great,
But the materials were only that which could be
afforded.

Time and wear have worn the thread,
And frayed the edges,
As the seams separate,
And the beauty fades,
The maiden sits,
And weeps.

Portraits and Reflections

The Phoenix People

To the children born in the eye of the storm,
Born in and of the ashes of sorrow,
Embers of pain,
Born in the midst of the fire,
A soul fire,
Burning isolation,
The torment of being victimized,
The horror of being violated,
Trapped behind bars of shame,
Ashes that won't wash off
They can only burn off,
Slowly, through the fire,
Not from the outside,
But purged from the inside,
There is no earthly strength strong enough to lift that
weight,
It comes slowly through a spiritual awakening,
Separating,
Pushing the darkness out,
Gathering into the center where the light is,
Where the light shines, unyielding,
And the shedding of the dead skin,
Is the birth of a new being.

I Am That Fire

I am that fire
It burns in me
It rages and I rage
Embers smoldering in the night
Burning images in my mind
The fire does not cease, nor do I sleep

Ashes dark
Thick smoke choking
It consumes,
I attempt to quench it
But only serve to feed it
A draft, and flames ignite
It's out of control, as I
I try to run but it is in me
Running fans the flames

No air
Gasping
My mind spinning
Fatigued I lay in ashes
Mourning
The flame flickers,
Flickers,
A faint glow in the dark, black, night,
I sleep.

Portraits and Reflections

Where Do We Go from Here

I remember you when you had long hair,
And patience and you weren't afraid of the world.
I remember you when you spoke about the moon,
And the beach, and the trees.
I remember you when you moved as though soft music
was playing somewhere,
Music I couldn't hear, but I saw it in you.
I remember when our life was a walk in the park,
The silence of the woods, and the magic of a sunrise.

Are those days so far behind us now?
Have we crossed so many mountains now that we can't
find our way?
Back to that ocean of wonder we once shared?
Has the world become so big and distant
That we can no longer embrace it?
Do we now let that bigness come between us so much,
That we can no longer embrace each other?

I see you now across the room,
I remember the friend in you.
So much has changed now,
It doesn't fit the roles we live.
Where Do We Go from Here?

The Veil

Mumbled voices,
Faded dreams,
A taste on the tip of my tongue,
But distant from my mind,
Something I forgot to do,
Or to say,
Or being other than myself knows,
An awareness of something apart from itself,
Close, yet far off,
Reminders of a time I chose
And another I didn't,
But why?
What is this understanding that abides with me,
But stays just beyond my reach,
Anticipation of a sound that does not come,
But does exist
If not here, than where?
Is it within me to embrace this feeling that embraces
me
Or will it flee, like the breeze,
Between my outstretched fingers?

Portraits and Reflections

Fall

An angled yellow sun drifts lower in the sky
A strange gold tint highlights the trees
Their shadows are cast earlier and longer
Summer came to play but now moves on
A summer guest stayed
carefree
Long hours of laughter and fun and so much time
Abundant warmth and rest
But time is cut short now there is work to do
The chill nips at your heels and presses in
The warm blanket of summer was yanked off abruptly
by the nights chill air
Awaken from your slumber, Guard yourself
Winter lurks, cold and harsh
A weight to carry in thick garbs and conscious effort

Merry Go Round

Merry go round
And around
The music plays and the horses dance
Up and down and around
When I was young it was dreamy and fanciful
Painted horses,
Lights, and colors and magic
A round shiny quarter and I can dance
Around
I can be apart of the dream, of the dance
An empty pocket and the horses dance for someone
else
Another quarter
But this one's a phone call to you
To be connected, to be with you,
For a time
A quarter is time
For a quarter I paint myself with a uniform
The music is the hum of the wheels on the pavement
I spend my days climbing up and bending down
My truck is a big white painted horse
And I drive around
And around
Another quarter mile and I can get off this horse
Another machine and I am a quarter short of a cold
drink
My last quarter spent for a moment in the shade
Dreaming of youth and a ride on the merry go round

Portraits and Reflections

My Passion

In a dream I saw you,
A shadow in the moonlight,
A whisper that woke me,
Softly I heard you,
I turned and felt your hair fall gently on my cheek,
I reached for you but I could not touch you,
My heart cries for you, I can feel you,
I look around and there is no one there,
But I feel you near, Come to me,
My heart waits,

Through a thick wood I walk,
Boughs brush my side and I feel you there with me,
In the midst of a daydream,
I felt you close to me,
A part of me I am separated from,
I long to be whole, To feel you in me,
You are my love, My passion,
I call out to you, I am here,
It is dark and I cannot see,
I need you to hold my hand,
I am alone and afraid,
I need you to warm my heart,
The darkness holds me and I can't pull myself out,
But if you would hold me I would be lifted up,
You are the part of me I can't reach,

And I am a part of you,
I hear you calling me from out of the darkness,
Reach with your heart and feel me here,
I will close my eyes and reach with my heart,
For you, for me.

Dark Reflections
Dark Reflections

(Dark Reflections)

Portraits and Reflections

Direction

Faded plaids, gray stones, windy nights, and rainy days
Distance, uncommitted
Withering trees, brown snow, hearts crying
Echoed screams of emptiness across eternity
Bodies push on in undetermined directions,
They walk with apparent purpose,
They walk toward fulfillment,
Where are these greener pastures?
Hold my hand and walk with me,
Walk with me until I walk of my own will,
Surely then I will know my own direction.
But what if I find no will of my own,
When your time of walking is done?
I watched you walk,
I walk as you do,
But I don't know where or why.
This you did not share with me.
Your will, your desires, your reasons,
These are your own,
Could I learn what could not be taught?
I cannot walk, I don't know why.
It tires me, I must sit and rest,
And perhaps I will soon understand.
Until then, the stones get grayer, the rain gets colder,
The nights get emptier, and the plaids just fade away.

Images

Is the image you see and respond to,
The image I portray?
Or is the image you see,
Perceived in your own mind?
Tainted by your own thoughts,
Emotions, and imaginings.
Did I cause you to feel this way,
Or was it your choice?

Portraits and Reflections

Fears

I wear my fears outside myself,
For all the world to see,
As if that is what I expect,
As my heart cries out,
The spirit hears and delivers,
That which I have cried for and expect.

In fearing I have become,
If only I had believed,
Maybe things could have been different.
Maybe if I had shown you what I believed,
And wanted,
Then that would have been given to me.

Death has no memory of life
But I remember you
Absent footsteps and quiet,
You are not there
It was cold and dark
I held you as you slipped away
Into that long dark sleep
I can't hold you anymore
Except in my memory

Absence

Paper dreams,
Thoughts acquired but never sought after,
To have an illusion,
Wanting but fearing,
And never close enough to try,
I see and I feel,
But I am not where or what,
Or how I dreamed I would be.
Walk in silence with shuddering sighs
The beginnings of tears,
Walk in silence, refrain, restrain,
Withhold, and wait.
Today is not yours, maybe tomorrow,
Joy lies at my fingertips,
Always at my fingertips
It is not for me to grasp,
Or to have or to hold,
Here are all the pieces,
All about you scattered,
Completeness is a carrot dangling on a string
At the end of a stick,
Just out of reach.

Portraits and Reflections

The Race

Like a runner running fast
Are you and I who share the past
All our dreaming all our hoping
All our endless days of coping

Run hard run fast run forever from the past
First anger, then frustration
Then deep burning isolation
The further the past, the further the pain
Not so, our running is in vain

Tired and breathless, I collapse exhausted
Bathed in the sweat of discouragement, all seems
 hopeless
The race cannot be finished, I will end it here
Let the dark clouds come, I will face my fear

I sigh deeply, let go of my last breath, and now I see
The enemy I've run from is only me
The race will not end at this intersection
So now is the time to change direction

Darkness

Darkness,
Deep gripping darkness.
Stillness with no rest
Quiet with no peace.
Darkness that eats away at me from inside.
Shadows outside mirror darkness within.
Heaviness,
Clinging, withholding,
A weight around my arms, legs, chest, and neck.
He's lurking out there waiting,
For what I don't know.
Perhaps for me to drop my guard,
So he can strike again
As long as he knows I am watching.
He waits.
It's a game he plays.
Wariness is tiring.
I don't laugh or play when he is lurking.
Maybe that is his plan,
To slowly bleed the life out of me.

Portraits and Reflections

Predator

The devil cast his eyes on me
And I on he
And from within I felt
My life withdraw

This shadow that envelopes me
Holds me still
A trance captures me

Only my breath reminds me that I am
But for how long
My breaths feel numbered

In the distance he lurks
Tugging on the string of my existence
And I like a fly am trapped
In his web of grief and sorrow
He then is the spider, dark, quiet, and deliberate

Finally Resting

Okay, so if life is like a day then;

Dawn is infancy, morning is youth, afternoon is mid-life,
Evening is retirement and old age, and nightfall
is... you know, the end.

I'm thinking now that much of life is about trying to be
comfortable. A comfortable pair of shoes, a
comfortable chair, comfortable with ourselves.
Sometimes it takes a lifetime to find comfort.

The sorrow of death is having to give up that comfort.
We work so long to find it that once we have it
we don't want to give it up.

Old age is God's way of making us uncomfortable.

On a tough day I look forward to coming home and
relaxing in my comfortable chair. It's nice, but
eventually I move beyond comfortable and get
just plain tired. At that point I accept that I have
done all I can do for this day and I resign myself
to just go to bed. Sleeping seems more
appealing and more comfortable.

Portraits and Reflections

Void

All the sorrow,
And all the sadness,
Of all the years,
Eclipse at once,
In a moment of realization,
Of lost love,
And broken trust,
Falling away,
And reaching,
But grasping nothing,
Only emptiness.

Portraits and Reflections

A Collage of Crowded and Restless Thoughts

Thoughts

Alone I am myself

I think, but in directions I tend to

Sometimes I feel or think differently

But most of the time I am myself

Sometimes I'm afraid of being by myself

*Maybe because I always tend to think and feel the same
way*

Sometimes I am creative

But mostly I'm just me

When you are here I put more effort into being

And sometimes that is good

And sometimes maybe I'm trying to be someone I'm not

I have difficulty being where I am

When I'm working, I think about playing or relaxing

When I have time to relax, I think about working

41 trips around the sun

sometimes I wonder where we are going

sometimes I watch the sights

sometimes I play cards to pass the time

Sometimes I ask why

*Every generation asks why and who am I and
where do I belong and what is it all for.*

*But the answers differ and they are affected by the
starting point of the question*

*The more our practical and functional needs are
met the less practical the answers are. Or
are we refining Practicality. Or was the
search for a dream, a fancy, or the melding
of the two.*

*Is each trip around the sun a chance to do it better
or a chance to learn more Or is that just the
way it is and I am thinking too hard.*

*So what is meaning? Is there a difference between
absolute meaning and relational meaning.
Or put another way is there a meaning that
is absolute and independent of who we are
and where we are at and how we relate to
others.*

Ambition and unrest or
satisfaction vs. dissatisfaction

If I am born in a war than my life is about war and
peace.

If I am born in a famine than my life becomes about
food.

A song unsung

Portraits and Reflections

Is a dream yet to be

A tear un materialized

Words unspoken

A thought, a feeling

*A ship at sea in the doldrums waiting for a wind or
breeze or some kind of current.*

Time spent waiting for change or inspiration

The dead space on an album between songs

Idleness

march and sometime between fall and winter

Balance

Standing in the middle is stagnate.

Swaying side to side is natural

*I want stillness and peace and quiet but wouldn't
that lead to stagnation Am I then at odds
with myself over my own desires?*

What then is stability? Or Balance?

*A rock lying on the ground is not considered
balanced or stable unless there is a
potential for it to fall. Are the words
themselves merely reflections of the
opposite, a negative image perhaps*

The great masterpiece will have to wait, there are
dishes to do,

laundry to fold,
special projects to do with the kids.

heating oil and gas
pull-ups and toilet paper
A ride to school
a light bulb to change
sweep the floor, tie my shoes, a ride to work
I need paper for my school report
Can I go out and play
Another gallon of milk

*the alarm clock rings and i get up and go
mindlessly through my morning routine.
Another morning traveling a dark road to
work. The music is droning and I am
wondering how I got here. I know all the
songs and many were fairly uplifting at one
time. But I have heard them so many times
and they are old now like me. And I wonder
again how I got here, old that is and
traveling this dark road at 3 in the morning.
It all made sense as it was happening*

Cattle

standing still

moving but going nowhere

Portraits and Reflections

*gathering bits of grass for nourishment
for what?*

Cattle lumbering, no hurry, nowhere to go

Time of no consequence

Standing, watching, waiting?

Cattle marching on paths that only go back and forth

From here to there and back again

Along fences walking

Standing staring

A steady gaze, intense but insignificant

Devoid of emotion

The amber glow of leaves fading from red and
yellow to orange and then brown flickering
out

a candle flickering and leaves clinging in the wind

stone walls strong and secure

woven rugs and woolen blankets

warmth and comfort

potted plants and arrangements of color

and purpose

woodwork crafted smooth to the touch

colors blended smooth to the sight

the furnace kicks on and hums its lullaby of warmth

the nip in the air is gently pushed back

Winds of change

The wind is change

It blows out old air and stagnation

We walk against it and it defines

And strengthens us

The wind stops blowing and we fall forward

Moving to quick we fall down

When life is easy we get comfortable,

Perhaps too comfortable

Soft,

Too soft to handle the hardships to come.

They always do.

There is a balance.

I do not wish for troubles, I wish to stay strong

But if troubles are what strengthen us

Then is to wish for strength to wish for trouble?

*I curse the wind but my legs grow strong pushing
against it.*

*The world turns again and the thoughts recycle in
my head.*

Another year to think and ponder.

Portraits and Reflections

It is all puzzle pieces on the floor. If I stare at it long enough the pieces will begin to fit.

Life isn't about finishing the puzzle it is about working on it.