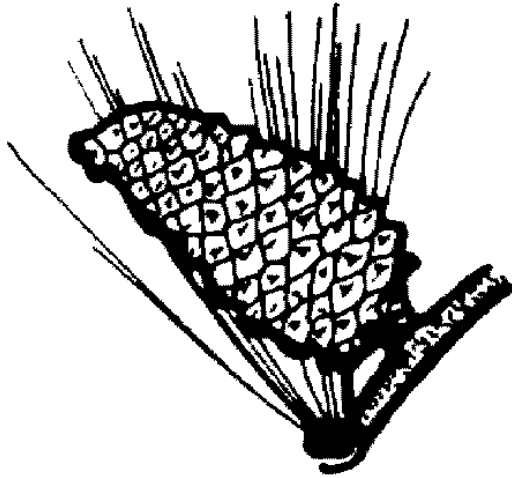


The Unusual Guest

By Zahhar



Journeys Into Poetic Forms

Volume I, Series II: Free Verse

Revision 3 – October 2003

The Unusual Guest

By Alan Polson

*Arriving after midnight
Slumping into a chair
Here to read poetry
His soul laid bare*

*The unusual guest
Lacking all fine grace
Brings light and joy
To an empty space*

Front Cover

The front cover art is from a free clipart web site. I do not remember the name of the site. It was originally a very small black and white pixel-drawn picture of a pine cone. Photoshop 5.0 filters were used to smooth out the pixelation of the original and apply a little shading after increasing the image's resolution substantially.

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Tentative Origins

The dawn of my current cohesive context began in 1971, though I don't think I reached any sense of self awareness until maybe '78 or '79. My love of poetry came rather suddenly within this context somewhere in '83, which was brought on by highly structured, rhyming poetry.

As with many who discover the realm of poetry, it wasn't long before I began trying my young hand at such forms as I was exposed to, probably also in '83. It wasn't until probably '90 or '91 that I actually tried anything with free verse. This was a result of a reluctant broadening of my horizons upon coming across unstructured poetry. At first, I was quite distressed by the concept of free verse because there was so much of it and very little of it seemed to hold actual content. My nearly ten years in exploration of structured verse instilled in me a strong belief that a poem contains content, not just rambling incohesive images. However, I eventually loosened up some.

This current cohesive context has been such the experience as to grant me quite a bit of content, albeit limited to its tight domain. The reason for this limitation is that I was denied anything resembling a formal education from grammar school forward. Lacking such conventionalities has made surviving in even the community college environment excruciating, at best. There is more to this story, it goes long and deep, but it can be disclosed in another time and place. Either way, this begins to explain the domain that is the context of my current existence.

So, the creation of content began in '83, and went until late '91. Then, it stopped. The tumult of the existence in question was such that my works, each and all, were lost to me. With the loss of these works did I also lose heart to produce anything new. However, the thought of ceasing to brush my thoughts and experiences altogether was entirely unpleasant. To alleviate this discomfort, I obtained into this context a cloth covered hardcover 8x11 journal and spilled aspects of this cohesion into the pages therein, along with meticulously crafted border designs between entries. This 200 page journal kept sparse log of this context's continuous unfolding until '99, at which time the cohesion made nest in Ukiah, California. This journal is apparently what was needed to pull back the internal elements necessary to inspire further efforts in my exploration of poetry. I began, tentatively, with free verse in late '97.

Only a few pieces were created between '97 and 2000. It was disappointing to me because this broad window of time caused me to lose touch with this context, and also vocabulary. Each word was arduously drilled out, each phrase tormentuously constructed. Yet, something changed by the middle of 2000, and this context experienced redirection toward a more complete exploration of poetry. It is likely that this context will remain focused such for its duration.

Pieces included in this collection have been selected from material written between '97 to mid 2002. This is a collection of free verse writing.

Background

In many ways, I feel that free verse is more difficult to approach than even the most highly structured forms of poetry, such as the *terzanelle* or English *ghazal*. The reason I feel free verse is so difficult to approach is because of the overabundance of freedom therein. Structured forms provide an inherent context while free verse is completely context free. It seems to me that lack of context can make cohesion of expression more than difficult. I am of the opinion that various “movements” have sprung up over the last century and a half to address this difficulty. Such movements would include Surrealism and Imagism. Movements such as these begin to bind a context and frame to unstructured poetry. Without this context and frame, free verse would seem like nothing more than confetti in the wind.

I have as of yet to buy into any of the philosophies behind the various movements in poetry that I have been exposed to, though I do try to keep an open mind to the ideas behind these movements and to make use of the ideas I take a liking to. The reason I don't buy into any given philosophy or movement is that doing so seems to narrow the scope of my vision and openness, which feels counterproductive to my goals as a poet. Such goals include forever trying to broaden my vision and willingness to consider new ideas and to evolve emotionally and spiritually as substantially as I may within the context of my current existence. To me, buying into *any* philosophy becomes counterproductive of such aims.

Because I do not buy into any fixed philosophy in relation to poetry, all I can offer in the way of understanding my approach to writing free verse is information about the conventions I follow. These conventions are more than likely inspired by my considerable and ongoing exploration of structured forms, as well as my reaction to continued exposure to work done in unstructured forms. Understanding some of the conventions I follow may make reading my free verse more meaningful. These conventions are centered around a desire to create a natural linguistic experience both in reading as well as expression. Not surprisingly, most of my conventions are centered around structural issues:

Line breaks: In my exploration of structured verse, I rarely come across *expressions* that are enjambed between line breaks. By expression I mean a fragment that represents a complete expression within the context of the stanza and then the poem. I use line breaks with utmost care and consideration. To me, each line break must represent a break in continuity of thought, feeling, understanding, etc—expression.

Stanza breaks: I use stanza breaks in free verse to separate whole segments of expression. The line breaks within a stanza I use to break immediate continuity, which may physically hold representation as a brief pause if reading aloud. In breaking a stanza, I may be jumping to another line of expression or wanting to effect a pause between expressions along the same lines. Either way, I intend for a sort of *stop* or *plug* in the stream of expression presented by the stanza at its close.

Punctuation: Since free verse is not prose, I consider any rules applicable to prose inapplicable to free verse. In this sense, I try to use punctuation only when it may clarify meaning. My stanzas normally do not close with a period, and my lines rarely close with a comma or other punctuating break. I might use the long hyphen to create a strong break of expression *within the context* of a stanza. I often use an ellipsis to leave an expression incomplete. I may use commas to suggest a natural pause within an expression or to clarify the structure of a line. For instance, to clarify the functional separation of two fragments. To me, punctuation is open game in free verse because free verse is not constrained to the rules of prose. I do my best to use punctuation meaningfully as I can, or not at all.

General Formatting: I am not necessarily partial toward particular sorts of formatting. In my exploration of free verse, I am most interested in conveying something I feel is meaningful in some way. In general, I tend to left justify everything except in rare occasions.

These conventions begin to define my personal approach to writing free verse. Content is what has the most importance to me. As such, I write for the sole purpose finding the words to express that which has particular meaning and importance to me. My exposure to and interest in structured poetry may reveal itself in some of my free verse. When reading my free verse, you will see this especially in my exploration of metrical free verse. That is, free verse where each stanza conforms to the same syllabic or accentual structure.

Poems in this collection, Volume 1, focus on a theme of self disclosure. It seems a fitting way to begin Series 2 of my Journeys Into Poetic Forms.

Some Understanding

Probably my most self disclosing pieces are in the form of free verse. The lack of structure and context lends itself nicely to a style of expression similar to free association. Below are prefaces to poems selected for what I feel is a general disclosure of my nature:

Coordination: People who come into my life as friends are normally less affected by my somewhat abrupt, yet reserved nature. Because of my lack of immersion into an educational system as a child, and for other reasons, my way of thinking and relating is almost completely unconditioned. To many who do not take the time to actually get to know me, my mannerisms seem to border on barbaric. When I wrote this piece, I attempted to convey in an almost apologetic sense some of the reasons behind my behavior, and my commitment to staying true to that which I've become.

Mauve Desert Rose: A semi-metrical poem that uses the life of a fictitious flower as an allegory to describing what my life has been like. The idea came to me when I was 12 years old to write this poem. It took 18 years from then for my experience and understanding to catch up with the idea and what I would like the poem to convey.

Discovery: A paraphrase of *Mauve Desert Rose* in many ways, but with a differing dimensionality.

Relation: Being genuinely different invites myriad annoying stigmatizations. It also has had the effect of making me feel that no-one could ever relate to or understand who I am as a person. This poem was born as I attempted to get to know women I found interesting and unique, and dealt with their reactions to my candidness and unusual thought process.

Dreaming: There is such magnificence to me in the place of dreams. This I wrote at an open mike after drifting off into sleep and having a vivid dream while the poet at the pulpit read. Upon snapping back to awareness, the same poet was still reading, and I began to ponder the beauty of the dreamscape. There were pangs of wanting to return and stay.

Blather: For many years it was important for me to feel like I knew something and would try hard to convince people of this and that with incredible amounts of verbosity. Eventually, it sank in that people didn't want to hear it.

Coordination

I don't mean to startle you
With candid honesty
I don't mean
For you to feel
Uncomfortable around me
Because I do not act
As is expected
Because I do not say
Commonplace things
Because I do not ask
Trivial questions

I do not mean
For my complete lack
Of convention
To displace you
From your familiar

Yet...
Please understand
Your familiar conventions
Are as unfamiliar to me
As I am
To you

I do not seek
To seem different
The difference
You detect within me
Is genuine
There are no cookie cutters
For the likes of me

For long and long
I sought
To fit in
With your familiar
Leaving in the dark
This that I am

The truth
Of this that I am
I have done with this
For the pain
Is unbearable

And while I still endeavor
To adapt your ways
I have ceased
Abandoning my self
In the quest

And so.....
Out of respect
For you
I endeavor to relate
If only
In some small way
To your familiar

For I have learned
You are not likely
To step out of your box
And attempt
In the slightest
Relating to me

It is not a game for me
Just a way
Perhaps
To find common ground
Whereby
You may let go
If only for a moment
Dropping your shields
To let me see you
The truth of you
As I let you see me

Mauve Desert Rose

here sprouted most unusually
from traveling seed
amid faint shade
of standing rock
alone

the scorching sun blazed brilliantly
lands stretching arid
to horizon
dismal expanse
my home

somewhere beneath the dry cracked ground
were my roots allayed
and so i grew
discovering
within

weary travelers one by one
in times preceding
have ventured past
and still unseen
my life

amid drear desolation vast
days long scalding dread
nights freezing pain
my heart took shape
growing

long seasons in succession passed
moon cycles swimming
resilience strong
through withered look
formed true

endlessly looking unto sky
forever reaching
comfort brooded
brewing slowly
soft peace

in great expanse of nothingness
my buds developed
and so they bloomed
for none to see
save god

Discovery

Lost in labyrinths of despair
Long I lived
In a vivid lonesome pain...

I found myself looked upon
Different
And shunned, I walked in shadows...

At times a light passed silent
Through the dark
Where dimly burned my spirit...

In the great and rolling sea
Human kind
My understanding slowly grew...

Forever eddied alone
The currents
Flowed on their course to nowhere...

In time I began to see
Clearly know
That which I am, so shall be...

With or without acceptance
Still I breath
This free gift mine to enjoy...

So darkness faded away
And I live
My peaceful path of purpose...

Thrilled by what many ignore
With my heart
Set apart from all the rest...

Within a maze of wonders
Long I'll live
A vivid and blooming life...

Relation

Do not think
That I am afraid
Of you
Of intimacy
Of dreaming long
Into your precious eyes

Do not think
For a moment
That I am afraid
Of your touch
Upon my heart
Within my soul
Of your splendid gaze
That so thrills my senses
Challenges my truth

Do not think
That I fear
My own inadequacy
That I have doubt
Of my ability
To please your form
Thrill your senses
Until you are lost
Drifting alone
In seas of pleasure
Joys immeasurable

I know myself
More than you realize
I have seen
Into fathomless depths
Of hell
I have journeyed
To incalculable depths
Within
I have survived
The utter end
The dismal annihilation
Of my soul

I see you
With eyes
That have bewitnessed
The very ends
Of all that is
With eyes
That have watched
In wonder and amaze
The phoenix
Rise from the ashes
The remains
Of a shattered life
The void

Do not think
I fear you...
Yet...
I would have you know
I do fear
One thing for certain
I fear
That you may never
Ever
Understand me

Dreaming

Drift in dream...
Shadows dance eternal
Beyond the great veil
Of awareness

Dreams shift in shadow
In the drifting realms
Just beyond consciousness
An endlessly shifting realm
Where lies
My lost understanding
Where rests
An ageless hope
It is there
Every time I cross over
Into that shifting realm

Ah...
If I could only stay
For all eternity...

The divide is great
Rising tall
An impossible crossing

Yet...
When my strength plays out
And I drop
Worn by fear
By conflict
I am catapulted
Over it
This great divide
And am lost
Blissfully
For a while
In that timeless
Shifting realm

But then...
The body recovers
Whilst I lay
Eventually am I torn
Ripped
From my shifting realm
And returned
Damnably
To this place
This shared reality
This static realm...

Ah...
If only I could stay
In my place of dream
That endlessly shifting realm
If only I could stay...
I would make my home there

Blather

Sometimes
Having nothing important
Or wise
To say
I speak
Just to be heard

Out my mouth
Off my tongue
Flies nonsense
Trumpery
Just to be heard

Unclear
Words pour forth
No thought given
To their impact
Palavering
Just to be heard

As if
They would become stuck
Lodged
Within my chest
Within my throat
I force them out
Aimless clack
Just to be heard

Oddly
I'm never done
Completing a thought
Another forms
Over and over
Until all at once
I'm cutoff
And made to feel
Foolish
Just to be heard

Somehow
I fail to see
The frustration
Disinterest
Annoyance
Of those around

Somehow
It doesn't occur
To my thinking
Perhaps
They just don't
Care to listen

Loss

To me, loss takes on many forms. Some of the obvious forms are the loss of a loved one to death or the loss of a friend to conflicts of interest or personality. Then there are the not quite so obvious losses. For instance, the loss of affection in a relationship, the loss of the ability to function after an accident, the slow decay of the body through the process of aging, etc., etc., etc. The list goes on.

It has been essential for my life to acquire meaning that I learn how to deal with loss because of its overabundance in my early life. Poetry has provided a means by which I may share the experiences to any who may find comfort in the relation therein. Much of my healing would not have been possible if I felt completely alone in my experience. So, it was the words and insights shared by people with experiences in parallel with my own that helped instill a sense of stillness both during the storm of my youth and its aftermath. Poems selected for this relation are prefaced below.

Reunion: My father killed himself when I was ten. He was pretty scary to me, so I wasn't immediately saddened by the fact. However, years later, I began to feel the terrible pangs of missing a father, wanting a father. This is based on a dream I had some years ago.

Cantillation: This poem attempts to address the loss of my father as a loving parent. The reason he was scary to me is because of his terrorizing abusiveness. My memories of him are mixed; this poem breaks through to some of the gentle memories of when he would sing me to sleep at night, before his insanity took him completely.

Irreconcilable Loss: Here I puzzle over the affect my mother's resentment toward me as an infant had on my perception of women in general. Denied that fundamental and instinctive love of a mother, it sometimes seems as if I am doomed to seek that love forever because this particular loss is somehow irreconcilable.

Overshade: Over the past few years my vision has begun a very gentle decline. So far I do not need glasses, but my eyes become tired more easily than ever before. Let's face it, it's depressing when some part of the body begins to malfunction.

unsourced: Sometimes the loss is too deep to be understood or named, yet it rips and tears from deep inside. Most of my youth is lost in a cloud, and I can't remember it. Yet, there is that pain of tremendous and repetitious loss rooted in that cloud that sometimes strikes my heart from seemingly out of nowhere.

Amelioration: Serious brain trauma in my youth impacted any potential I might have had in life. Aside from lacking preliminary education, I might have pulled off a college education anyway if my mind worked. In this piece I look at this loss and resolve to find in the remnants of the shattered dreams of my heart that which may be salvaged and built upon. My mind is at least healing.

Reunion

i met him once
in another plane
beneath pale blue sky
surrounded
by cold grey towers
older than time

i remember
walking by myself
down archéd hallways
stretching long
sullen and dim
devoid of life

life lived not here
though it did pass through
in its erring quest
to fathom
what it all means
this strange journey

i met him here
where corridors crossed
through ages brooding
we alone
held in our gaze
one another

his face showed pain
fathomless concern
i saw not in life
but here now
in this city
Necropolis

we did not speak
though thoughts in balance
poised long on his lips
unable
to form one word
from his pained heart

not one thing moved
in this agéd place
where motion and time
stood frozen
as in silence
our gazes locked

i saw his pain
his longing to know
how i was doing
in absence
of his own life
he took from me

Cantillation

A song resides within
Within my heart
His song

Sometimes
In those quiet moments
Where all seems still
I'll hear it
Ever so vague
Ever so distant...
His song

It seems
He must have loved
Music
Song
Me

Through life
When all is dim
Dark
Lone...
I'll hear it
His song
And somewhere within
Find comfort
Peace

Through life
When all seems lost
In chaos
Insane
I'll sing
If only gibberish
Sing
And comforted
Be

There is within
Within my heart
Deep within
A song
An undying song
Forever sung
By one who loved
Forever heard
By him who was loved
If only for a moment
Loved
Deeply so
Unconditionally

Irreconcilable Loss

My heart aches
Powerful and deep
For intimate attention...

Great rift gapes
I listen
With careful attention
But more
I watch
Adoring every nuance
With meticulous care
My eyes absorb
Fleeting images
Distorted likeness
Of fractured remnants
Withheld...
Withheld.....
Supplanted...
By its opposition
Counterpart

Infant heart
Sits within
Gazing aloft
In timeless search
For the withheld...

Flickering eyes
Dance and dart
Soothing faces
Bob forth and yon
None are for eyes
Of infant heart within
Still stricken
With panic
Overcome
By fear
Frantically seeking
Eyes looking deep
Gently adoring
Ageless comfort
Frenetically beckoning
To each floating face
Dark eyes and bright
For nurturing
Long since withheld
Cruelly withheld
Bitterly denied
By bearer of life
This life
Infant within

Overshade

shapes blur in the distance
falling obscure
slowly
as if diffused in mist
all that i know
falls from focus

losing lucidity
a fading dream
i pain
to the depths of my heart
in dark lament
i fight my fear

as definition fails
helpless i watch
all life
fade imperceptible
and wonder how
to venture forth

in artistic decay
a world bedims
despair
struggles within my chest
terrible loss
flails in my heart

lights now overwhelm me
pain slowly grows
in time
i collapse exhausted
wishing only
to close mine eyes

unsourced

what has inflicted
such a remarkable pain

i saw not the sword
responsible for this wound

i took no notice
of the lance that pierced my soul

there was no warning
of the force that tore my heart

just a sudden wind
blasting cold from the abyss

now doubled over
i clutch at a caving chest

anguish so complete
no sound can escape my lips

torment so utter
i cannot wish for release

if somehow i live
i will carry something dead

Amelioration

I sift
Through broken dreams
They cut
Like shattered glass
Slicing clean
Deep
Until the inner essence
Of this that I am
Wells forth like blood
From injured depths...
The tattered remains
Of my dismal heart

Most would recoil
Leave it be
The shattered glass
But...
I cannot
For I remember...
I remember...
Vaguely remember
There was a time
There was
When these broken slicing shards
Formed inspiring spectacles
Of drifting dreams

And so...
I rake my heart
Through this broken glass
Endlessly seeking
What may be salvaged
Salvaged...
From the shattered remains
Of broken dreams

Though gored and bloodied
My heart knows
Despite the pain
The gaping wounds hardly offered
A chance to heal...
My heart Knows
And slowly discovers
That which may be reclaimed
Among the fragments
Countless razor-like shards
Shattered bits
Of what once were dreams
...And painstakingly builds
With fragments reclaimed
New dreams
New hopes

I may not bleed forever
The day may come
When my wounded heart
Has healed
In spite of it all
And sifts no longer
Through broken dreams

Effect

One of life's most intriguing aspects to me is the effect some events have in their contribution to eventual paradigm shifts. In my exploration of self, I find that I spend a lot of time pondering some of these events. Sometimes I wonder why they happened; sometimes I wonder why I was affected by a given event; and, sometimes I'm just plain thankful it did happen. Poems selected for this theme are prefaced below:

Touched: This was written in '97 when I began to explore words again. There are a series of pieces I have written over the past few years that I call *question poems*, because they are written entirely in the form of question without offering anything resembling an answer. In this piece, I explore the effects some of my life's most powerful experiences that reset the course of my life and thinking, and I pose the question in relation to these experiences, "Have you ever been touched..."

Sky: In '94 I went skydiving for my first and so far only time. It had an effect on me that I'm still trying to figure out.

Effect: The landscape of my childhood was bleak, at best. I met a little girl as a little boy who freely shared with me her affection. She held my hand, hugged me, and always wanted to be near me. In that time of emptiness, I was given a gift in her innocent affection that was the difference, for me, between life and death.

Vestige: Another piece inspired by the same childhood friend and the landscape of my youth.

Fable: In '98 I met a woman who woke something up in me. We were becoming close, but I backed off because it was moving too fast. I distanced myself a little too late because I was already very attached. I may not ever fully understand what happened, but she refused to see me or communicate with me after that. This poem describes a dream I had of her, and it was a dream I'll never forget, just as I'll never forget her.

Fancy: What use would living be if not for the delight and beauty of women in the world? Of course I fantasized all through life, and will probably continue until my very last breath. But, mostly, I fantasize about the almost innocent thrill of affection shared, just sharing affection.

Treasure: There was a point in my youth, around 12 years old, when I met a woman who had a most wonderful impact on me. She was beautiful and I thought about her for years. I would fantasize that we would one day meet when I was an adult and fall in love. As my youth progressed and various traumas, physical, mental and spiritual, assailed me, all hope of such loveliness died. In 2000, at an open mike, I saw a woman very much like the one from my childhood, and I immediately sat down and wrote this in my journal. It has been revised and improved since then. Because this piece is long and has a couple of longer lines, I have broadened the formatting for the columns to conserve space.

Touched

Have you ever been touched
So deeply
So completely
So utterly
That everything changed
Everything

Have you ever been touched
In your heart
In your soul
In your spirit
In all that you are
And everything changed
Everything

Have you ever been touched
To where you trembled
Cried
Pondered
Guessed
Hoped
And couldn't explain why

Have you ever been touched
To where impossible emotion
Welled up
From unknown places within
Impossible emotions
You could hardly explain
Could barely understand
So overwhelming
You went into shock
And shivered
In cold stupefaction

Have you ever been touched
To where you found yourself
Inspired as never before
To where you found yourself
Groping for answers
Praying
Over and over
For understanding

Have you ever been so touched
That all you've ever known
No longer made sense
No longer mattered
And you struggled
To let go
How you used to see
What you expected
What you thought counted
Realizing
It was never
What it seemed

Sky

Air flies past
Eternal sky reels
Earth is like a map

Nothing seems real
Yet...
Reality's every detail
So undeniable

No weight
Yet...
Fall forever

No control
Yet...
Go any direction
At will

In overwhelming motion
Stillness saturates

Chaotic peace

Effect

For Hope

I will not give up
The search
The quest
For, I love her
She was my only hope

When all was lost
When I had nothing
When my feeble existence
Lay shattered and torn
When my heart was ever so cold...
From the vacuum of indifference
It was her
She brought me hope

When my soul withered
Like a dying rose
In a desert of utter loss
Loss of love
Loss of affection
In an abysmal empty absence
Of hope
It was her
She brought me hope

At a time when no warmth existed
When my spirit was crushed
Utterly
Dead
Broken
She was to me
An angel of hope

Vestige

For Hope

Miss her
She who was there
When there was no-one else
When all was lost
And there was no hope
None at all

Was at a time
When life was void
Of even the most basic things
Affection
Peace
Love
And every waking moment
Was filled with fear
Terror

Was at a time
When all I had
All I knew
All I understood
Was the fear
The dread

Was at a time
When each and every night
I lay in bed
Alert
Afraid
Trembling
Anticipating
Something ominous
Something terrible

Was at a time
When I feared dying
Every bit as much
As I feared living
When every moment
Was filled with panic
And dismay

Then there she was
Out of nowhere
Walking with me
Holding my hand
Kissing my cheek
Hugging me
Accepting me
Just accepting me
With love...

Into the tragedy
Of my tenebrous existence
She shone a light
Into the insanity
And restless consternation
She brought tranquility
Into the terror
And utter despair
That was my life
She brought hope

Then
Sudden as she came
Was she gone...

I've never forgotten
I'll never forget
Oh!
How I miss her!

Fable

Dreamed of her last night
So beautiful
So utterly beautiful
Seemed so real
Undeniably so...

In this wondrous dream
We talked
And as we did
She placed her hand
Upon my knee...

We talked
I remember not what of
Inside me
I shuddered awake
At her touch...

Pretending not to notice
Or care
Feelings woke in me
To remarkable depths...

And it was such
That I asked her
To move her hand
Away...

Explaining
In me it woke
Great feeling
She said "no"...

Looking at me
Eye contact
Smiling with feeling
And mischievousness...

In that moment
I loved her
Hugging her
I admitted
"I'm so afraid..."

She lay her head
Within my lap
I bent above her
Nuzzling her face...

Her sweet face
Her neck
Her delicate neck
Feeling her hair
Touch my cheek...

Lightly
Gently
Warmly
My shuddering had ceased...

Her eyes were closed
She seemed at peace
I felt at peace
Inside...

To my deepest depths
I woke
And began to accept
The warmth...

The miraculous warmth
We shared
The astonishing beauty
Of the moment...

And here
From the dream
I woke...

The great warmth
Still within
My chest
Heart
Everywhere...

What a remarkable touch
Was hers!

Fancy

I am charmed
By her slender form
Petit
Soft seeming
By her lovely face
Inquisitive eyes
Sensitive lips

The way she moves
Fluid and gentle
My mind wanders...
Thoughts
Of holding her
In mine arms
Exploring lightly
Her face
With my lips
Savoring her scent
Taste of her skin
Nuzzling her neck
Burrowing my face
In her soft brown hair
Flowing like a breeze
Stimulating my senses...

I can't help
But to imagine
How it would feel
Laying next to her
Cuddling full length
Against her
Feeling her warmth
Along my form
To feel her lips
Tongue
Explore my neck
My ears
Cheek
Forehead and chin
Eventually to find
My lips
To join them
In delicate passion
Drinking of the other
As we tremble together
In unbridled excitement

Treasure

I could swear
I dreamed of you
Long ago...
But a dream
So long forgotten...
Lost

Lost perhaps
With the incredible loss
Of hope
Love
Life...
So much more...

There was
So much devastation
In my heart
My spirit
My mind
In all that I am
Utter devastation
Of the thing
That once I was...

This
Was long ago
Seemingly
Endless ages
Past and faded
In the mists of another time
Now even half forgotten
Mostly forgotten
Pushed from memory
For the sake
Of living

But that dream...
I know
You were there
Flashing
Your brilliant smile
Calming the turmoil
Of my spirit
Thrilling to life
My zombie heart
Like a wondrous sunset
Blazing on mountains
Clouds and seas and lakes
Haunting my thoughts
My heart
With fancies of love
And tenderness

Then...
Then....
The cataclysmic devastation...
That rendered my heart
And all that I was
Asunder

It came to pass
I stopped believing
Refused to believe
You existed

In the years
Seemingly countless years
That have come to pass
As my heart
Began to mend
In the impossible aftermath
Of that devastation
The soul-shattering devastation
Miracle of miracles
My shredded heart
Shattered soul
Broken spirit
Began to heal

Still I chose
To lock you from me
All of me
My heart
My hopes
My dreams

And that dream
So long ago
Wherein you thrilled
My feeble heart
With your beauty
Your remarkable beauty
Your genuine beauty

I rendered it from me
That dream
To survive
I rendered
The thought and fancy
From my mind
The hope from my heart
I had no choice
At the time
I could not live
If I held onto the hope
That you were real

Yet...
It would seem
Your touch within me
Through this forgotten dream
Through the unchartable destruction
Of all I was
All that I ever
Had the chance to be

It would seem
Your touch within me
Lost in the sordid haze
Of every imaginable pain
All conceivable hells
Remained

Your remarkable touch
Within this that I am
Remained
Through it all

Now
I begin to remember
It was so long ago
So abysmally long ago
I would permit
Myself to dream
Of one such as you

Now
Here you are
And I stand
Deeply inspired
Touched
In all that I am
Inspired
To believe
Hope
And dream

Perhaps
I am stronger now
Perhaps
I will venture to dream
Once again
And hope within

Perhaps
It is time
I let my heart dream
And hope
Once and for all
For one
Such as you
For love
Such as yours

Quest

A portion of my life was spent wandering the open roads of America. I was 15 years old when I ran away, and stayed away. Though I tried settling down in one fashion or another after I turned 20, I couldn't decide where until I moved to Ukiah in '99. In many ways, much of my life has been spent in quest for the place I would call home. Below, some relating poems are prefaced.

Adrift: Though I always notice the hitchhikers along the side of the road here and there, I must have been in a particularly reflective mood one day as I drove to an open mike in Santa Rosa. There was a grizzled old man on the side of the road who, for some reason, gave me the impression that this is what he would be doing until the end of his life. Upon reaching the open mike and signing up, I sat down and hand-wrote this poem in my journal. Later I typed it up and revised it some.

Venture: This piece actually makes references to some of the first poems I wrote when I began writing again in '97. Those poems are too long to fit into this chapbook. Here I look on the inward lands of myself and ponder the venture through this land as I wander and explore this that I've become.

return: By the time I wrote this piece, Chinese poetry began to affect my writing. I've found myself fascinated by Chinese poetry, and I read translations to English. Imagery is not used in Chinese poetry, not in the sense that western cultures understand imagery. The vivid descriptions and allegorical metaphors in Chinese literature is something I refer to as *visuals*. These are direct personal and cultural visual experiences that carry meaning within the context of the Chinese culture. Western imagery do not have this power and depth. In this piece I attempt to use visuals to describe the feeling and experience of discovering my home at the end of my long quest.

Adrift

Drifter
On the side of the road
Your place in life
Intrigues me...

It was
Not too long ago
I myself drifted
As you now drift
Endlessly hoping
For a new ride
Into the expanse
Of the uncertain
Road
That stretches
And circles
Forever....

I was
Younger then
Yet.....
Ancient
In my own way
Some would say
I am
An old soul

Rubbish...
I am
A newborn
A newborn...

As are you
Stout drifter
There sitting
Waiting
On the road's edge
For your next
Adventure

I remember
I ran
Blind in my fear
Blind in my bitter rage
Blind...

Blind.....
Sight sealed
To all
But the ragged art
Of survival...

And so
I survived
A mindless survival...
I can see
Dear drifter
That you as well
Have survived
Survived...

But.....
I wonder
Are you content
To simply survive
In heart
In mind
In soul and spirit
Just survive
Until that hour
Where your blessed light
Is extinguished
And your erring survival
Ended

And what
Will you look upon
In your final moments
Will you gaze
On the flashing scenes
Of mere survival
Will you wish
You did more
Than simply endure
Will you regret
Your long survival
Realizing
In those final moments
You never
Actually lived

Venture

Strange journey
A strong wind blows
Against me
That which I am

Into the passages of time
Forth I go
Into the days ahead
On I press

The life ahead
Seems not so bleak
The winds of time
Seem not so drear

Somewhere within
I look
Unable to recognize
The inward lands

The desert
Vast and lone
Is not as it was
The barren emptiness...

There are trees
Waters
There is life
Somehow, life

Years ago
I prayed
For the four winds
These seeds to sow

Prayed
To god
Tend the growth
Of that which is sown

Slowly
Bit by grueling bit
The deserts fade
Into forest

Fantastic journey
A great wind blows
Within me
That which I am

return

foliage rises up the mountains
clouds amass upon the eastern ridges
i am home, finally i am home

my feet grew sore in the desert
my back stiff on the plains
like gusts of wind, i could not rest

rivers wandered their courses
stars glittered from the abyss
starved and alone, i followed them

one day i crested a ridge
and cradled in a valley
a hamlet lost from the world

this place i had never seen
yet what my eyes never knew
my heart somehow remembered

in the world i am tossed relentless
storms pass to leave me in ruin, but here
am i a cypress firmly rooted

Conclusion

This begins *Series II of Journeys Into Poetic Forms*. I have many ideas I'm interested in exploring through a broad spectrum of these little chapbooks.

Thank you for taking the time to sift through these slivers of expression that have formed over the course of five years. I have included what I consider to be poor examples of my free verse in amongst what I think of as finer examples. The reason for this is that I have found that many of my poems I like the least, my friends will like the most. So, in an attempt to create a balanced example of my work, I have tried to adhere to a theme of self disclosure, selecting the poems that seemed to fit closest within the theme rather than looking for what I feel are my best works.

The title for this chapbook came from my friend, Alan Polson, who wrote a poem about our friendship titled *The Unusual Guest*. This poem is included on the inside of the front cover.

The last two pages are reserved for any thoughts you might have as you read. This is something I've always admired about some older books of poetry.

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Thoughts

Contact

To see more or to contact Erin (Zahhar):

<http://www.mochinet.com/Writing/CB/>

Or write:

Erin A. Thomas
109 ½ S Pine St.
Ukiah, CA 95482, USA