

Sea Stories



→ Steven Gurtis Lance

Sea Stones
+Steven Curtis Lance
Published through Lulu Press, Inc.

Copyright © 2006 +Steven Curtis Lance

Book Design and Layout by
integrativeink.com

All rights reserved by the author. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

CONTENTS

Sea Stones	1
Franziska!	2
My Truth is in Your Beauty.....	3
Tending the Light	4
The Death Penalty for Suicide?	5
Dusty Lace Spun Round and Round	6
Touching Hands and Hearts as We Do.....	7
Sure as the Sunrise Stalks the Night.....	8
Sidewalk Semper Fi.....	9
If I Should Fade Away	10
Life is a Wheel.....	11
Circle Song.....	12
Dream.....	13
No	14
Dime Time.....	15
First Nasturtium.....	16
On the Universal Specificity of Reality.....	17
Ghost.....	18
Lost Soul Found.....	19
Wink Everlasting.....	20
Deus ex Machina.....	21
Break Your Chains Now!.....	22
Flash.....	23
Still Here.....	24
Spring Rising.....	25
Of Eternal Joy	26
Paradox of Equinox.....	27
Nor Does it Matter Anyway.....	28
Could Be Worse	29

If I Fall I Fall in Love.....	30
Lights and Shadows.....	31
Hope.....	32
High Tide.....	33
They Say Sell Out and Move Away.....	34
For Love.....	35
Sweet Spring at Last.....	36
Absolute Us.....	37
Lone Wolf.....	38
Sawyers and Lawyers.....	39
Dance Me Spring.....	40
Incurious George.....	41
Throw Your Stones.....	42
Family.....	43
"How Naive of Me".....	44
Road Song.....	45
Autobiographical Dust.....	46
Enough.....	47
That Brand Still Burns Which Once Was Burned.....	48
A Stripling a Scamp and a Hobbledehoy.....	50
Poltroons Buffoons Jackanapes and Scalawags.....	51
As I Look in Your Eyes.....	52
Raven.....	53
Beyond Actuarial Eschatology.....	54
I Think I Love You.....	55
Take Me.....	56
We Share and Are Thankful.....	57
Poetry Competition.....	58
Jesus is a Worker Too.....	59
Just the Two of Us.....	60
Like Comfortable Lions in the Sun.....	61
Death is for Stiffs with No Sense of Humor.....	62
Hope Survives.....	63
Kitty Noseprints on the Window.....	64
One Lone Wolf to Another.....	65
We Will Meet Again.....	66
Out of the Blue.....	67
I Think My Cat's Part Kangaroo.....	68
Respect.....	69
Cool-Dawning.....	70

My Pet and His.....	71
Kiss.....	72
Rose Riddle.....	73
Manatee Man.....	74
On the Sword We Live By.....	75
Look Us in the Eyes.....	76
May it Make You Free!.....	77
Frowning Upside Down.....	78
Shadows.....	79
Free!.....	80
Just Before Dawn.....	81
Bowl Riddle.....	82
When I Hold Hands With You.....	83
Never and Always.....	84
The Evening Sacrifice.....	85
Love.....	86
Totenstille.....	87
The Golden Light of Summer.....	88
The Wise Live by Surprise.....	89
Prelude and Fugue: Hamster Treadmill Universe.....	90
Wings.....	92
Six-Seven-Six.....	93
Buzz-Cut!.....	94
Rainbow.....	95
An Opening Flower.....	96
Strong Tea and Hope.....	97
God Save Me and Her Majesty.....	98
But Not Without a Fight.....	99
Brought to Life by Love.....	100
The Meaning of the Night.....	101
Poetry is Not Supposed to Be Hard.....	102
The Wayfaring Way.....	103
Up.....	104
Itch.....	105
Oblivion.....	106
Together You and I.....	107
Apocalypse Calypso.....	108
Hitler Farted Constantly.....	109
The Gift.....	110
Falling.....	111

Vow the Now.....	112
The River	113
Between Darkness and Destiny.....	114
Blood Offering.....	115
Blinking into Light.....	116
Whatever it Takes	117
Love Her.....	118
Be	119
Fly Away Home	120
"What is Truth?"	121
...So Here I Go.....	122
Our Everlasting Now.....	123
Rhinestone Cowboy Heart.....	124
Deadline	125

SEA STONES

My son said the words of my poetry
Are like stones smoothed and rounded by the sea

Like sea stones I have carried from the beach
I carry his analogy with me
While savoring the sayings all and each
Of his and other hearts in my own heart
As inward echoes after when apart

Love grows down deep like the roots of a tree
And up from these roots through trunk and through stem
Through bud and through bloom the seed comes to be
Smoothed like these sea stones and rounded like them
As life is love so love is poetry

FRANZISKA!

Valentine's Day turned out to be
Quietly meaningful for me
Content and content I know
The love of those I love will grow
I washed my clothes and hung them out
To dry along with all the doubt
I had and held beneath bright sun
That even this heart has someone
To love with whom its love to share

I reach out and find she is there
That she was waiting all along
That life is good that love is strong
That there is hope that I can see
That love makes both of us more free
Than we could ever be alone
Franziska! You have always known
While I have been a little slow
To know what you will always know

MY TRUTH IS IN YOUR BEAUTY

People and trees are marked by the times in which they grow
Both shaped by the storms and bent by the winds as they blow
Even rocks and mountains rise and fall as do we all
People have so little time to notice as they go
We never see where we are going till we are there

By then it is too late to notice too late to care
And we never know why just as we never know where
We arrive if we do how or why we are alive

Nonetheless here we are: both of us left to wonder

And not about arrival but simply survival
I have given up trying to find out what is true
The one known in this unknown is that I feel alone
All I know is that survival feels better with you
My truth is in your beauty and that will have to do

I want to make love to you before we go under

TENDING THE LIGHT

fiat justitia ruat mundus: fiat lux

Humankind seems hell-bent on being unkind
As if shedding the skin of humanity
Like a snake wriggling out of its higher mind
No more content to agree to disagree
Now everyone must be absolutely right
Generating so much heat so little light

Those who are locked-out look from the outside in
The last having least the most generous here
Who cannot compete and therefore cannot win
But neither can they lose and are used to fear
And these are my people out here in the night
Have your heat inside: out here we tend the light

THE DEATH PENALTY FOR SUICIDE?

Is suicide against the law?
And what is the penalty? Death?
All I know is I saw what I saw
And it took away my breath
As well as perhaps my dignity
But by that time there was bound to be
Trouble and my bubble burst in any case
Tell me: why did I come here in the first place?

Come to think of it I never came
Certainly not voluntarily
I am not really the one to blame
For the rupture of reality
How on earth I should come to birth
Remains a mystery to me
Yet here I am for what it is worth
Now if only fleetingly

The death penalty for suicide
A governmental answer
Strong deterrent and statement beside
No one allowed to outrun the clock's tick-tock
Let people die of cancer
Or heart disease but naturally
If that is more natural than
Being killed by one's fellow man

I think I will just have to run out the clock

Stupid people stupefy
Muddled people mystify
Suicidal people die
In my case I think that I
Must muddle through along with you
As best (tick) I (tock) can

DUSTY LACE SPUN ROUND AND ROUND

Violet incense on the air
Existential absurdity
Dusty lace curtains everywhere
And a bloodstain on the carpet
Like the things I cannot forget
Make this the only home for me
I tell the kids and I tell you
Never explain your poetry
Because those who will get it do

The rest will never be impressed
Though they seem cross they are depressed
They say their freedom is not free
And so it seems yet in their dreams
They fly up to where they can see
My house down here where I am found
Wreathed in violet smoke and bound
By dusty lace spun round and round
On transcendental fantasy

I wave to them and say good night
Their bubbles burst upon first light

TOUCHING HANDS AND HEARTS AS WE DO

for Franziska on her birthday

Civil war in Iraq
And plague is coming back
This time around known as bird flu

Our people are in pain
Our leaders are insane
What on earth are they thinking of?

We can only wonder
But if we go under
I want to go under with you

However hard we try
We live awhile then die
Win and lose laugh and cry

What we are looking for is love

We simply want to be
At peace and safe and free
To live with dignity

Not to be beneath nor above
Touching hands and hearts as we do

SURE AS THE SUNRISE STALKS THE NIGHT

I have done a lot of grieving
But I did it all believing
That someday things would turn out right

And even through all my straying
I have done a lot of praying
That I might never lose that light
Which once my mother gave to me
Even in this darkness I see
Hope: small ...so faraway ...yet bright

I stalk it still I must I will
A mortal ill with mortal chill
Sure as the sunrise stalks the night

SIDEWALK SEMPER FI

I hugged that boy from Concert Choir tonight
Right out of high school he joined the Marines
And he told me he had just gotten back
From his third tour of duty in Iraq

I hugged him grateful that he seemed all right

Standing on the sidewalk here at home means
So much more now having been wounded there
In Fallujah second tour and my prayer
Is that all these kids will come back to me

Then I saw that edge of war in his eyes

From first blood on the blade of destiny
Adrenaline flash smoke flame dust and fear
Twenty-one fifty-one both realize
Whether in war or on the sidewalk here:

Life is never how we thought it would be

IF I SHOULD FADE AWAY

If I should fade away
At least I have said
Just what I meant to say
And at least you read
What I wrote you today

I gave you my heart
Which is more than most have done
Expressed through my art
Finished what was first begun
When my world fell down around me
To reveal a better one
Became the man I meant to be
Rode the rising setting sun
And wrote it down as poetry

Having had my say and day if small
I might not even fade away ...at all

LIFE IS A WHEEL

Everyone seeks to leave something behind
Something by which to be remembered when
As we pass into the dark flying blind
And know we will not be coming back then
It is our hope that someone will recall
Something of us as wings fail and we fall

Something which could continue to be part
Of the fabric of life woven into
The quilt which warms the universal heart
Made up of the hearts of me and of you
But that which is born never really dies
And monuments mean little in the end

Old faded life lives on in bright young eyes
In those moments like these we share my friend
With the whole human race through time through space
Through life through death we share heartbeat share breath
We are as it were out of many one
And everyone is found in anyone

Everyone seeks to leave something and does
But that which is left is not made of stone
Or stocks or gold or real estate because
Only life lives and no one lives alone
Life is a wheel perpetually spun
Each ending a new turning is begun

CIRCLE SONG

Apricot blossoms adorn an old tree
Once planted by a child who grew to be

Me

And now bees and finches are visiting
As the early spring birds nearby nesting

Sing

A circle song of continuity

DREAM

Child of an awkward age
And hard to understand
On nightly pilgrimage
Within a darkened land
I would no longer stay
Where plastic wraps the rot

We have no more to say
Your eye avoids my eye
We know that we know not
I shake my head you sigh
And I go on my way
To find what we forgot

Long shadows drown the day
And sunken lies the sun
Now night will turn the page
A chapter now begun
In darkness for the mage
Whose work is not yet done

The road embraces me
Here night and day are one
No false light mocks my eyes
I need no light to see
Right through the world of lies
Past false "reality"

To dream and to be: free

No

Only
When I refused to be
Lonely
Could I begin to grow

Because
There was nobody there
There was
Nobody anywhere

Before
I had refused to see:
No more

Now I know there is no
Other who would ever
Stay one who would never
Disappoint nor hurt me

No: all would desert me

Only
Now I refuse to be
Lonely

No visitors no phone
No lies just what is true
One needs to be alone
For that which I must do

Fashioned in darkness from smoke into flame
When you see these ashes: ...remember ...my ...name

DIME TIME

They tell me tomorrow will never come
But insists on staying a day away
In which case then we had better make some
Mischief by which to remember today

What of yesterday? I say forget it
And let tomorrow never come what may
Make the most of now and not regret it
This is all we ever have anyway

Moment by moment each one at a time
Shiny and small as a new-minted dime

FIRST NASTURTIIUM

The first nasturtium of spring
A gift my Grandma gave me
Volunteering offering
Ancestral light to save me
From the dark of my despair

Petals of flame spell my name
In simple hope which burns there
In this microcosmic sun
Solitary like the one
Which warms us both above me

We two stand remembering
The loved and lost who love me
Still as always and who will
Through the thawing winter's chill
Reaching from eternity

As above so even here
Through my sickness through my fear:

This nasturtium blooms for me

ON THE UNIVERSAL SPECIFICITY OF REALITY

The zenith of the whole celestial sphere
As well as its nadir are both right here
The celestial sphere is here inside me
It is also true it is inside you

Reality has specificity
Specific gravities unique to each
And each reality its lessons teach
As all the stars glisten: look and listen

Unreal to me are war and eating meat
Also alcohol drugs and folderol
And those who enjoy their war in Iraq
Should go fight it there and save their attack
For their imagined enemies not these
Mothers and others who worry and reach
Out to seek peace when the world has gone mad

If Bush and Blair love war so let them go
And fight it themselves and I would be glad
But leaders are liars as all now see
I do not consume what others excrete

Each and every consciousness has its own
Specific universe: leave mine alone

GHOST

You speculate on what survives within
This shuttered shattered sepulcher you see
Where the night does not end nor day begin
Where dappled in the twilight shadows play

Stained with the stinging unguent of abuse
Descending generations death and sin
In living death one soul still flickers there
No explanation given nor excuse

Too many things to tell so none to say
Tethered by taproot deeply dungeoned where
A crust once human to the dust gives way
Emily Dickinsonian recluse

You pass by on the sidewalk and know not
The tales these darkened windows weep tonight
Heavy debt a head-shaking attorney
The living bearing what the dead forgot

Birth-broken wings flap their futility
Futureless featureless backwards journey
Bright sunshine on all sides but here no light
There never was nor will there ever be

In rotting graciousness the grave lies deep
A black hole where the doomed and damned await
Dark ancestors scold from unquiet sleep
Unending grief inherited from fate

The ghost which haunts this haunted house is me

LOST SOUL FOUND

Lights burning darkly day or night always
Three beds in the house and I sleep in none
Mattress-stuffed memories sterile of joy
Shades of the dead toss and turn in each one
I can no more nor need tell nights from days
An infantile and eternal lost boy
Lies quiet on the front room couch unknown
The shade the least alive here is my own

I went to a psychiatrist and he
Said I must move out immediately
A quarter-century ago so I
Took his advice but have come back to die
At last if least since this is what we do
All generations give or take a few
Who died elsewhere then came home here like me
For falling leaves home is the place to be

The circle once unfinished joins complete
The wheel once broken turning is made whole
May choice absolve by triumph my defeat
May God have mercy on my misfit soul
But it is mine to give to take to keep
Death in the last of life's surprises dies
As now I lay me down to wake to sleep
A lost soul found and freed arises flies

WINK EVERLASTING

Through a naked pecan tree
The Morning Star winked at me
Though now I see it is gone
My heart tells me it shines on
Beyond sunshine behind rain

Tomorrow if there is one
It will wink at me again
And even if there is not
In my heart shines this bright spot
Through a naked pecan tree

Pinpoint puncturing of light
From the Morning Star to me
Hopeful still of happiness
After a bad day sad night
I never give up I guess

Hoping against common sense
Confidence is recompense
When the Morning Star comes by
Winking encouragingly
To dreamers watching the sky

When something goes wrong you find out who your friends are
When everything goes wrong you find yourself alone
My present is uncertain my future unknown
But shining on in my heart winks the Morning Star

DEUS EX MACHINA

Ringin' at my door to change my religion you
Indulge in a fundamental futility
I am the least likely patsy or pigeon to
Re-create in your image fundamentally
Although you say you are not fundamentalists
I watch as you mark me down in your little lists
Methodically although you are no Methodists

Long published by the Methodist publishing house
Despite being existentialist Lutheran
I know a thing or two about people like you
So I urge you cats to move on to the next mouse
Just walk on by and give up as hopeless the man
Who lives here cross him off your lists one more lost soul
Who will learn soon enough if what you say is true

Sorry if you fall short of your recruitment goal
But all fall short of the glory of God they say
And from the looks of us we both fall short today
You simply cannot capture before your "rapture"
Those you annoy by interrupting anyway
When the morning comes by faith I will see the light
Nor need real gods sell door-to-door ...therefore: good night

BREAK YOUR CHAINS NOW!

Through the teeth the times have broken
Mocked maligned misunderstood
Truth is now but faintly spoken

They do badly those who would
Give their lives as sign in token
Of the greater common good

Left unarmed and branded fools
By that which sucks our souls away
That which rules with iron tools

That which controls the earth today
Yet whines of liberal bias
Smothers to silence what we say

Our masters know best what we need
Porcine weekdays Sundays pious
We exist to gratify greed
To satisfy their church of chains
Of phallus-fetish superpower

But I can feel the labor pains
Even at this hell-darkened hour
Of overthrow of brawn by brains
Unfolding as the lotus flower
A new revolution is begun:

Break your chains now! Rise up like the sun!

FLASH

Given enough time the dust of our days
Embeds us within the quilt of always
Foot to head the mother blanket is spread
Until the living are one with the dead
Turning back from birth turning back to earth

And so when our destiny comes calling
We answer it first rising then falling
An arc which begins and ends in the dark
Before and after destiny is done
With us beginning and ending are one

But at the zenith closest to the light
When we are soaring highest in mid-flight
How heady and how thrilling are those days!

Alone on our own to and from always
How ready and how willingly we fly
From womb to tomb bright as our life streaks by!

And there is nothing else for us but this
Flash on our way from and to the abyss

STILL HERE

When the Democratic Party calls me
I always give them another ten bucks
Since this junta we have now appalls me
With blood on its hands the while as it fucks
Me over reads my emails taps my phone

The only consolation I have is
I begin to see I am not alone
Apparently some few agree with me
I give ten bucks to the A. C. L. U.
Whenever they call and gratefully too

For if they will fight against Bush and his
War on brain-damaged poets who keep cats
Eight billion a month but eight hundred for
We disabled who give to Democrats
Maybe the A. C. L. U. could help you

I am grateful for those who fight this beast
Which prays as it preys on the last and least

I spend as much time as I can asleep
These days and am otherwise despairing
Yet there are those who bridge the dark and deep
Franziska and my kids wake me caring
And this is my cat Freddie's tenth birthday

I am still here and will not go away

SPRING RISING

Spring has come bringing a new chance for me
Past the hard winter of my discontent
To get outside and see what I can see
Having survived with half my life unspent
And feeling that my best is yet to be
I mean to bloom and nothing can prevent
The realization of destiny

Having never been fashionable
I never go out of style
Conservatives say I am trouble
Number me with terrorists
Mark me down on little lists
But now in spring we could bloom awhile

The people who run the world are insane
Their boots on our necks the long winter through
Spring is the time when life rises again
And I would like to rise again with you
As hand in hand we take a stand to bloom
And rising by our sun of spring to smile
Defeating their winter of dark and doom

Spring is the time when life rises again
And I would like to rise again with you

OF ETERNAL JOY

for Franziska

At the apex of all madness
Star atop the Christmas tree
Sparkles that sweet shining gladness
Of the light you share with me

In the joy of the eternal
Past the mad beyond the sane
The celestial and infernal
Burden blessing boon and bane

Friskaziska Franziskana
How I love your German name
Here post-Pax Americana
We are peaceful just the same

In the midst of sin and sadness
Burns a higher nobler flame
In its everlasting beauty
I find all I need of fame

In our existential duty
To transcend the shit and shame
Of a brutal and barbaric age
With Franziska on a pilgrimage

Of eternal joy though sanity cease
One girl one boy: practitioners of peace

PARADOX OF EQUINOX

Without adventure nobody wins
Motion is stopped by paralysis
Experience by analysis

At the equinox of day and night
Where yin and yang in the balance hang
In the equipoise of dark and light

At the still point of the hurricane
The locus of death where life begins
The blind eye opens to labor pain

The seed now sown is reaped grown in the fall
Life is the reason spring is the season
When life commits to death and bets it all

Vernal to autumnal and back again
This is the paradox of equinox