

A Wink and a Kiss

It has been said my poetry has range
That it is high and low and in-between
Because I have lived much and seen such change
Now I can share with you what I have seen
Beautiful horrible sacred profane
Every breath and heartbeat day and night
All of it valid none of it in vain
All of it was fate and all of it right

I write it all down as well as I can
That which was and is and maybe could be
Alienation and absurdity
The life and love and death of you and me
Reflected by one lost and lonely man
In obsessive rhyme at the edge of time

I wonder just as you might wonder why
I go to this trouble only to die
But once I knew I wanted to live true
I felt called to write these things down for you
Who read this since I thought you might need this
My blood my blessing a wink and a kiss

Acceptance:
My Own Good Old Days

In my life in many ways
'These are my own Good Old Days

It has been and will be worse
'Than these days of rhyming verse
As I spend my equity
I can see the end of me
Better not to think about
'That of which there is no doubt

'That if I live long enough
Things will go from tough to rough
Bad to worse as I rehearse
'The fall which awaits us all
And my fall will be bitter
But I am not a quitter

Who knows? Maybe someone will buy a book
Or give me a chance or a second look
And is it too late for a twist of fate?

I must confess
'That I guess yes
But I digress:

In my life in many ways
'These are my own Good Old Days

The Crazy Man Who Called Me

The crazy man who called me
Told me that I am passive
Told me that he is massive
The crazy man appalled me

He analyzed me that I wear
A sign on my back there
A mark which invites people to kick me
He is what we used to call a bully

(I gather he is a loser
I think he might be a boozier)

A real he-man Republican
He said he was because
He worked for the Bush administration
In this case I might favor castration

The crazy man who called me
Spoke of conspiracy
Yet not of poetry
The crazy man appalled me

I am flattered he recorded each word which I said
Now maybe he can listen to me when I am dead

Friday Nightmare

Another Friday night alone
I wonder if the crazy man will call
Remind me to unplug the phone
Or to change my number once and for all

Not so long ago a beautiful voice
Remembered me and made my heart rejoice
But now I hear the harsh sounds of attack
Triggering memories of Uncle Jack
And of a dark childhood which never was

Or I wish it had not been because
It always felt like I feel tonight
As death waits for me impatiently
Here in the darkness so far from light

I wish I could not hear if I must be
Alone in this nightmare since I can see

Transcendental Sonnet #1389
A Few Tricks Left

My readers do not care for one another
They each read me for varying reasons
Red states versus blue brother against brother
Euros and Brits through varying seasons
With the only commonality mere me
In my maddening multiplicity

"How could you write that?" some ask as my white hat
Fades to black and some attack as it slips

But then after awhile most come to grips
With the fact that sometimes I lack the tact
Which I would have if only my mother
Were here to set me straight: so please do not hate
Me for the fool which I can be and bear with me

I have a few tricks left which you might like to see

Tonight the Moon Hides Her Face

All right and very well it seems
Love is not in the cards for me
Empty promises broken dreams
A childlike faith that destiny
Would somehow bring me happiness
But once more I learn the hard way
There is no such thing more or less
If only I could fade away
And put an end to all this mess

It is amazing how much fuss
And folly love requires of us
But leaves us empty in the end
At least it is true in my case
Even one I thought was my friend
Now turns away from me today
And tonight the moon hides her face
If only I had sooner known
That I was meant to be alone

I would not have tried would not have died inside

Transcendental Sonnet #1390
Romantic Poet Seeking Muse

Sweet ladies I offer a proposition
I hope you will understand my position
As a man full-grown with children of my own
Yet somehow a child myself and utterly
At sea as to what is to be done with me

Would you have an idea any of you
What a man in my position is to do?

If so could you share it and yourself with me
See if we could somehow taste of ecstasy?

Is it too late for us to alter the fate
Of being alone which so long I have known?

I am no living legend and no master
My life sometimes resembles a disaster
But my heart is true and I am seeking: you

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Dreams:
Crossing Time and Death and Space

for Patricia Lance (1934-1998) my mother my friend

Whenever I sleep I dream
Of my mother who has been
Gone from this earth for seven
Years now but lately I seem
So lost as to what things mean

I know she is in heaven
But I dream of her each night
Maybe just a little light
Escapes from where she is to
Where I am in darkness here
Since I hate to bother you
With my loneliness and fear

Does this mean somehow she sees
My life go from bad to worse
And in moments such as these
From across the universe
Lets me know that she is there?

I know my mother would care
That she would not forget me
My father may regret me
All I do is bother you
But love can go anywhere
Crossing time and death and space
To dry these tears from my face

**Transcendental Sonnet #1391:
Decoration Day**

Memorial Day MMV

Our old flag from the Second World War
Stands at attention by the front door
Home alone here where my mother grew
Up in those days of red white and blue
To marry a man I never knew
Who fought in that war and then one more
And boxed and drilled and wrote poetry
Between and afterward fathered me

Grandma called this Decoration Day
Family would come from far away
And we would take them to the graves of
Those we remember honor and love
Decorating them with memories
As the ravens watched us from the trees

Transcendental Sonnet #1392
You Will Know When

Neither before nor after but only
When the moment arrives and only then
At the time appointed to the lonely
Comes the companion and you will know when

But there is nothing for it but to wait
No mortal can reset the clock of fate
Stronger arms than mine timeless and divine
Move turning hands to sweep across the face
Of what has been what is and what will be

The challenge we face is to meet with grace
Surprises borne within the mystery
When the moment arrives and only then
Hidden in those hands as for you and me
Comes the companion and you will know when

Transcendental Sonnet #1393
Tonight As I Look Back Upon Today

Tonight as I look back upon today
I remember twenty-four hours ago
I saw no hope could imagine no way
For happiness I simply could not know
Could not begin to see how I could be
Within this quiet place I am of light
I never dreamed tonight I would be free

The sun goes down but does not bring the night
After itself as if to close the door
The moon is rising and I hope for more
Hope rises whether sun or moon I see
Faith lights a candle whether rich or poor
And love will bloom at midnight inside me
Tonight with hope and faith to light the way

Little Underestimated Me

To swim upstream to stubbornly resist
The obvious defy all common sense
Which says that it is hopeless to persist
Against such grim determined and intense
Unequal opposition as though fate
Itself had set its jaw against me now
I bet my life that it is not too late
That there is still a chance for me somehow

I simply will not give up till I win
For I have come too far to turn away
I fight to the finish once I begin
And I will win no matter what they say
I have a lot of fight left in me still
Though I might only make one step a day
Step by step I will take another hill
And no one will taste sweeter victory

Than little underestimated me

Void

The void where the one I loved used to be
From which she tore herself with violence
Is one which cannot heal apparently
A wound which defies all medical sense
Or any other kind of sense at all
A black hole into which all else is drawn
A dead star all-consuming in this fall
From which I wish to wake to find it gone

Yet from this hollow heart it never will
Be gone nor lessen but always remain
Suspending me thus terminally ill
To know that I cannot be well again
With only this to count on just this ache
Of emptiness an everlasting pain
Which although all else should my heart forsake
Will always be yet not be here with me

The void where the one I loved used to be

Seeds of Destruction

Here on the outside looking in
Defeated before we begin
Stand victims of the culture wars
As ours is victimized by yours
Of course you say yours is divine
I wonder therefore what is mine?

That would be the opposite I suppose
But only your God in your heaven knows
Who tells you not to judge us but you fudge
You know you are right and you never budge

Except when it fits your flexible fancy
Which makes your certainty certainly chancy
But that is just me espousing heresy
And of course as for you we know what is true
Hypocrisy as far as the eye can see
You make the rules so you get to break them too

There on the inside looking out
"Might makes right" was not very bright
"Shock and awe" was the lock we saw
The rock on which you broke the law
Seeds of destruction seeds of doubt
Now sprout as you turn out the light

Goodnight my conquerors sleep tight

Monstrosity

Monstrosity of a monster's deathwish
Wearing hell's halo and hovering high
Above a ruined planet's deathbed scene
Mushroom cloud like a monstrous jellyfish
Soaring like a damned angel in the sky
Too late to contemplate what might have been
But not too late to mourn what we have lost

Our lives were lies we could not bear the cost
Of being our own gods and holding in
These trembling hands the scales of grace and sin
We dropped them and they clattered from our hands
They shattered and I hope God understands
And who am I you ask me who am I?
Just someone who is too alive to die

So many times I asked you begged you why
But each time and each day all you would say
Is you knew best and I must join the rest
Just keep my eyes down follow and obey
But you have killed my world are killing me
Monstrous jellyfish of a mushroom cloud
I never knew what could make you so proud

But now I see you grin in victory
A monster's deathwish a monstrosity

Remiss Like This

A new friend once observed that I am diffident
Would never force myself on you nor shout
My capabilities unto the trees
And that for an author this seemed different
But I have a great deal to be modest about

I neither interview myself nor toot my horn
Do not doodle my own ding-dong all the day
But would rather listen to you about your kids
And seldom Google myself since I was born
To people without egos who did not believe in ids

...Except for my father who never would bother
With me but we never noticed anyway...

Vanity of vanities! My vanity
Is here somewhere I just cannot find it right now
I misplaced it along with my sanity
Until I find it I can muddle through somehow
Remiss like this but I could sure use a kiss

Transcendental Sonnet #1394

Erasers

The school year is ending and pencils sell cheap
At the gigantic grocery store
So I bought a lot of them and stacked them deep
In my Grandma's old wooden desk drawer
Pencils are things which are very hard to keep
Enough of and I always need more

Not the pencils actually
They last as long for me as anyone
It is their erasers you see
Which never last to their end once begun
Confronted by uncertainty
Without erasers I get nothing done

Pencils all over the house with their erasers rubbed flat...
Write with no erasers? Even I am too smart for that...

Transcendental Sonnet #1395
Early Saturday in Early June

This early Saturday in early June
The sky is gauzy as it is this time of year
And grey but it will yet be sunny soon
If not today then surely when July gets here

Where I live it is always like this on these days
In early June these grey and gauzy Saturdays
And I recall so many of them all so sweet
Loved and lost at One Forty-Five North Cleveland Street
But here is one today and there will still be more
One day recalled as fondly as the ones before

I think the sun is trying to come out
And I can feel that it is getting warmer now
I want to stand on my front porch and shout
I love you and to feel you love me too somehow

Transcendental Sonnet #1396
I Embrace My Life (If a Little Late)

The sun has come out much to my surprise
I thought it would be gloomy all day long
But life takes delight in lighting my eyes
And when I feel weak making me feel strong

I just never know what I will see when
I look out my window not until then
Since it is always changing which is nice

None of us ever lives the same day twice
And if I had to do it all again
I would keep the pleasure but also the pain

All of it the way it is was meant to be
There is no way to escape the hand of fate
If I were not like this I would not be me
So I embrace my life (if a little late)

Bloodstain

Whoever you were wherever you are
I send you sweet kisses if from afar
Remembering the magic we once shared
You do not love me but are part of me

Because of you I lived and died and dared
To live again so I embrace your pain
Since it is all these empty arms hold now
All you left me except for this bloodstain

You were the best and never mind the rest
So I will take what our fate will allow
And send you sweet kisses if from afar
Whoever you were wherever you are

Was Me

The father sought to split and call it even
When the sallow sick unwanted baby came
The mother fought to fit and call it Steven
And both of them thought it would die just the same
Yet it did not to everyone's surprise
But grew a fragile child with big brown eyes
In spite of them and Steven was his name

The father's diamond eyes ice-blue and cold
Look from the outside into where he is
The brown-eyed mother never got to be old
But lived through her child and her eyes are his
Eyes of the mother reflected in the son
Who never really has been loved by anyone
Except for her the way they were was beautiful to see

As for the rest he did his best was dutiful: was me

Good Morning Mr. Jones!

Expecting your daily grind
You wake up in the morning
And discomfited you find
Overnight without warning
You have gone out of your mind
You notice your worldview starting to decay
And you wonder if you wished your life away

But reality shatters
And it no longer hurts you
That nothing really matters
Society deserts you
But it does you a favor
Because it has no flavor
Or is it perhaps that you never had taste?

And is a mind a terrible thing to waste
Really? Or does no one care?
But you no longer worry
Because you left yours back there
And need no longer hurry
Just to keep up with the Joneses anymore
Because now you know the Joneses are a bore!

Transcendental Sonnet #1397

Farmer Sometimes

I weeded my backyard and I feel better
By meeting some primal agrarian need
The spirit of the act and not the letter
The general and not particular weed
I pulled them all nor did I discriminate

By manifest destiny my hand of fate
Acting as grim reaper and it was cheaper
Than having it done and a whole lot more fun
Synthesizing vitamin D in the sun

A Lance as a farmer not wearing armor
With calluses on my unaccustomed hands
Tonight as I write: my neighbor understands
I need to be a farmer sometimes he does too

It works for us and I think it might work for you

Echoes and Embraces

I accept that I am meant to be alone
The truth hurts but I take it with a sigh
That I have no mate and it must be my fate
To be solitary although not unknown
I intend to be noticed before I die

You will hear of me someday early or late
Although you laugh at me and wonder why
Anyone would notice me since no one cares
To be with me but destiny will show you
That someday you will know me as I know you

Look at this page and tell me whose name it bears

Consider whose work you hold within your hands
Echoes in your mind embraces your heart
Do you realize that someone understands
You? Someone has already become a part
Of you and a spirit has joined with your own?

I accept that I am meant to be alone
But it is also true I am alone with you

Coming Around the Corner

In November
There was something I wanted to say
I remember
But no one would listen anyway
So I forgot
And I cannot remember today
But I am not
Important and it does not matter
What I say today or any day at all
Memory seems a curse
I am small and was forgotten in the fall

Things go from bad to worse
I cannot remember anything
Nor can I bear to now
I only hope that summer will bring
Sweet mindlessness somehow
I will lie in the sun
And forget what was done
In November
Since waiting just out of sight impatiently
Is December
Coming around the corner for you and me

A Sense of Place

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I need to be here where I belong
But I am not here because I need
Nor even because I belong here
It is just that I have always been

Here is where I feel a sense of place
I have never found myself elsewhere
But I found they did not want me there
That this is my point in time and space

I believe this and belief is strong
As the fragile fantasy I feed
By faith my memory tear by tear
Everlasting blooming evergreen

This place this moment belongs to me
And yet I can no longer bear it
I wish there were someone to share it
If only to see how good it can be

To share in the grace of a sense of place

A Boy and His Cat

Some people like to see their cats as wild
To see the lion in the housecat's eyes
But Freddie Noodles is my fellow child
A friendly lion in a handy size

Our interspecies relationship is
Mutually beneficial and his
Interest in my welfare is genuine
All the time I spend with him is time spent in
Good company my Freddie Noodles and me

Should we disagree telepathically
The problem is solved very soon and resolved
For we have evolved into the best of friends
Justifying each others means and ends

I find him to be the best housemate for me
Never a word in anger spoken
Never a promise made nor broken
A boy and his cat and that is that
Which is by any other name as sweet

A happy household of boy and cat
Where both of us always land on our feet

Not Anymore

Every Friday he games the system
Guilt-tripping fellow authors to reply
But from now on I mean to resist him
Becoming an honest man as I die
And only say what I feel like saying

He should hope that I say nothing at all

It sickens me and I feel like staying
Away from shallow popularity
Transactional and fractional at best
Flying high now but headed for a fall
He will never make a monkey of me

I will not fail now if this is a test
The time has come for him to realize
I was not born to gratify a bore
Ask me no questions I will tell no lies
Not anymore I am no whore not anymore

Red and Blue I Love You

Flag Day MMV

A poet in a troubled country at the edge of time
I seek to speak the truth albeit stylized and in rhyme
One state two state red state blue state we all wait for the
spring
Which some would force to hurry up the return of the
king
Dysphoric dysthymic democracy of thee I sing

While patient red state readers sigh and pass on to the
next
Blue staters dig and delve to find themselves within the
text
Of these the strange creations of this the strange creator
Just little old me your pencil-wielding gladiator
And I mean no one any harm I only would keep warm

But if you warm a little too just know that I love you
Red and blue with some white between if you know what
I mean

Shatter

The street is full of potholes
I suddenly realize
An emotional shakedown
The fence is full of knotholes
All suddenly filled with eyes
Another nervous breakdown
In the making

I can feel the memories
In the shaking
Of my hands at times like these
In the breaking
Of these icicles tinkling
At my bleeding feet
As frozen tears are sprinkling
Down the snaking street

I fall into a pothole
And I disappear
You watch me through a knothole
Far away from here
The stars are falling
I am too
And I am calling
Calling you

Does it matter
If I shatter?

Going Public: Too Sensitive?

My friends all say I am too sensitive
Unkind ones get to me too easily
If there is anyone under the sun
More fragile than me I have yet to see
One and in give and take I am all give
How is it then that in the cosmic plan
Someone like me ends up a public man?

As others scrutinize and criticize
I agonize but then I realize
This is my lot in life it is my fate
To be an open book for all to read
And if you do then I appreciate
It and I hope we meet each other's need

Somehow

Despite my sensitivity I still write quite a lot
I maximize what little I am given or have got

And now

In predicting my obituary I can be specific
I am sure someday someone someday will use the word
"prolific"

Transcendental Sonnet #1398
Sunday Sundown

My doctor sent me a poem today
The first of his he has ever shown me
And my lawyer carried me far away
Back to the Vietnam of memory

My neighbors would gladly give me a ride
To an honest mechanic I know of
Should Grandpa's '65 Chrysler decide
Not to start and need to be shown some love

When I come home my cat is waiting here
For me where I can see that I belong
My sense of place is well-defined and clear
And my identity has been forged strong

Here in this place where I was meant to be
My origin my home my destiny

Remember Me Today

I take delight in a change of season
Especially from colder to warmer
A protracted dawn which gives me reason
To greet the latter forget the former
To hope for the best and forgive the rest
Now generally expecting to see
My future prospects match the mercury
Rising under clear blue skies together
Life imitating the artful weather
Which clears away the spring's uncertain haze

The bright sun somehow makes me feel secure
Brings a certain certainty to my gaze
The answers to my questions seem more sure
I think things might turn out right after all
Until the end of summer when the fall
Returns and turns to winter and will pass
Beneath first leaves then snow this barefoot grass
Before the winter bears us all away
I grasp the golden promise of the sun
And when fall chills this summer now begun

When winter kills remember me today

The Restless Moon

The moon was up early in my backyard
Before the sun went down I saw it shine
Out of its element bone-white and scarred
Standing stark against the startled skyline
Having intruded into afternoon
As if off-course and having come too soon

Yet now that it is night I cannot see
It anywhere and it has gone away
Elusive reclusive as if to play
A game of cat and mouse the moon and me

The two of us appear and disappear
A characteristic both of us share
As when the moon looks down I am not here
And when I look back up it is not there

But it was there this afternoon and I
Might catch it on the other side and soon
When next I look up it might happen by
My fellow wanderer the restless moon
Whose absence I can feel the loss the lack
Moon if you see these words of mine: come back

For Donna and For Scott

*to speak the unspeakable
to bear witness for the dead*

If I kill myself am I a murderer?
Is it as bad as killing another?
What of interrupted ones who never were?
I have lost a half-sister and half-brother
She to suicide and he to criminal neglect
Is it any wonder then that I do not respect
The father we three share?

I am the last and least

In the belly of the beast
There I have spent my life where
Although unbearable
However terrible it is for me
For Donna and for Scott
It is no more for they are not
To be for them was not to be

I honor you my siblings though unknown
The last and least and lost is left alone

About the Author



Winston Churchill once said of Clement Attlee that he had "a great deal to be modest about." So do I. Attlee did beat Churchill in that election though.

I'm nobody, really. I call myself "The Lucky Little Bastard" because I came back from the dead when I was nineteen; that was quite a trick, but I can't take credit for it. God has been good to me; they say he takes care of those of us who don't have enough sense to take care of ourselves.

I was born and raised and still live in the old family home, the last and least, in Old Towne Orange, California. I share Studio Lance, as I call it, with my good old fat old cat, Freddie Noodles.

I have three wonderful children to whom I refer as "intelligent friends": Maria, 21, Stevie II, 19, and Teddy, 14; I enjoy their company and our close relationships very much. Otherwise I pretty much keep to myself, a recluse, something of an enigma to many.

I drive the 1965 Chrysler Newport Sedan I picked out for my grandparents when it was new, but it hasn't been running lately. I like to walk here in Old Towne, especially in warmer weather. I'm a skinny little guy, very sensitive to cold, very sensitive in general, actually.

I'd like to get to be a good poet before I die, if I can; I'm doing my best. I'm fifty years old now, born on New Year's Eve amid thunder and lightning in 1954. Everybody always seemed to think I'd amount to something special, starting off with a bang like that, and then also coming back from the dead like I did. I was in a coma for awhile, and supposedly my brain was

completely destroyed. Nobody understands, least of all me, why I am here or what I am doing or how. I know I'm really curious about everything; that's the why of it.

I got to be really good at composing a cappella choral motets along the way; I like counterpoint. I've learned a few things here and there, even won some awards and things which don't really matter. To my mind--such as it is--kindness is the only thing which really matters; I want to be kind.

I am a simple and an honest man, and I want to be remembered as a kind man too.

New Poems is my fifth book of poetry. I hope you like it. Feel free to look me up anytime and get in touch. Call me up and I'll read you some poems.

God bless and keep you.

+Steven Curtis Lance

