

The Red Book of Lance

+Steven Curtis Lance

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+Steven Curtis Lance
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*I believe in poetry
Thought distilled and crystallized
As artform and therapy
By which dreams are realized
Spoken to reality*

*Things which one could never say
By poetry are spoken
Here the hopeless find a way
Out of reach to common speech
To hope where hope is broken*

*Poetry repairs the breach
Whether written whether read
Hearts connecting each to each
Saying what cannot be said
Reaching what is out of reach*

*Stylized speech by which we deal
With the world we thus create
With loved hated feared and real
People things and celebrate
Mourn exult cajole debate*

*Opening closed hearts to feel
Opening blind eyes to see
Opening deaf ears to hear
Opening both you and me
There and here and far and near*

I believe in poetry

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Foreword by Robert D. Budman, M. D.

There is a place in heaven for many yet no spot is assured. Many seats in the majesty of the heavens are surely for the artisans of the world. Humble, wholesome souls for the most part, and Steven Curtis Lance would assuredly be counted amongst those. In the writings of Stevie his honesty and emotions come across clearly and vividly. The prose is an enigmatic slice of life that is uniquely his. The prolific writing habits that Stevie possesses make many a writer, myself included, jealous of his tenacity for attacking each morsel of life's daily grind. Sometimes making fun or a mockery of the little things or at other times taking a challenging stand against the most critical and important issues facing us today. This is the poetic style he embodies for the rest of us to enjoy.

As Stevie's doctor I engage him in a manner differently than any of his other relationships. That perspective allows me to see him from many perspectives from healthcare professional all the way quite frankly to a personal friend. Over the span of several years in that regard I saw his transition from Christian songwriter to poet and the dynamics involved in that change. Not only has there been a growth and learning phase to his abilities to put pen to paper, but Stevie's life and writing is a fantastic journey of love and emotion.

This is now his seventh book and perhaps his deepest and most mature work. At each phase of his writing career his personal state of being comes across in every word. This book is no different with a certain brooding and darker more forceful stance on life yet continuously instilled with his hometown old Orange slant. Stevie rarely leaves us questioning what he is feeling or where he is going, but he does make us question our personal relationships and dealings with others. Of course there is often a

push for us to be politically and socially responsible, too, whether by way of rantings and ravings or a push to be heard and accountable.

I think Stevie's writing will take another turn soon as he takes us elsewhere in the land of feelings and prose. There is no harm in that. And, for the enjoyment we each derive from that, and the clear good nature and good will of Stevie's contribution to our wonderful world that spot in heaven is reserved. Not too soon of course so that we might read these little snippets of life and love and Grandma and whomever else man or beast or machine happens to be captured by the flowing inks and pencils of one fine man: Mr. Steven Curtis Lance.

Ready

Now I let it all go
I am ready to die
But if you must ask why
Then you will never know
You would not understand

I am not complaining
Nor am I explaining
Simply waiting to go
To new life to new land

As a dry leaf in fall
Learns to fly even so
In its time that is all
And the way it will be
For this leaf which is me

No debate only fate
When the autumn winds blow
And my gaze is steady
Because I am ready

The Moment of Pure Being

The eternal conundrum finds
Existential resolution
When loving hearts to troubled minds
Speak peace be still you are not ill
It is just that you must let go
Embrace the light be still and know

Who fights with fate can never win
Acceptance of mortality
Is offered as the master key
And those who take it then begin
To live each day as though the last
Transcend the future and the past

Now is the only solution

For only in the now is found
The secrets of the universe
Where one has been where one is bound
And rich poor up down better worse
Mean nothing to the moment of
Pure being which is life is love

Wait

How long does it take to live
Down a past for which I grieve?
Would it be better to give
Back my gift of life and leave
This fight? Would God then forgive
My desertion we believe
To be murder even though
It is my own life I take
Having made the choice to go?
Is this a choice I can make?

How much is enough at last?
Everyone speaks of the now
But the future frightens and
I cannot escape the past
My now is a no-man's-land
State of suspension somehow
Between being bound and free
I am ready to die but
Frozen by my fear of what
Has been is and is to be

Since only one knows my fate
I will trust in God ...and wait

Uncle Jack Called Me an Invalid

The thing which makes of me an invalid
My individual residual
Of what was done to me* and what I did
Disables yet enables me to be
Of a peculiar perspective to see
The most unusual as usual

By which the invalid is made valid
Each breath and heartbeat and tick of the clock
An unexpected miracle of grace

Blessed are those who can forget like God
Whose healing forgiveness serves to unlock
All of the doors which are slammed in my face
A validated invalid if odd
I continue my daily pilgrimage
Validated in an invalid age

**(done to me by Uncle Jack)*

Succubus

I slept all day and made coffee at midnight
I see some of you think that you are lovers
Never mind love it is life for which I fight
So go get 'em boys but a shadow hovers
Just over your shoulder as you grow older

I know how it is for that same shadow haunts
Me too just like you: but ...I know what it wants

Kiss of Death

I got out with my soul
Still under my control
Or at least not under
Hers which is a wonder
Considering how she
Controlled the rest of me

Succubus! I made it
Out alive and paid it
All back in blood and tears
The worst and best of me
Those high and haunted years
And I still have my soul

As for the rest of me
Such as my heart my mind
My health I had no choice
But leave all that behind
And the sound of her voice
Will haunt me all my days

Always always always

Oh shattered yellow rose
Does he write you poetry?
In Swedish I suppose
Do you ever think of me?

That which is dead can never die
No hope of ever turning back
Oh yellow rose now turned to black
Take this my kiss of death goodbye

Refreshing

All the middle-aged fancy folks have calmed down now
(Including me) A teapot-tempest come and gone
It is only you who get me through this somehow
Swimming through a night of sludge knowing that the dawn
Will bring another day of you another way
A better brighter fresher way for life to be

And you and only you give me the light to see
Through the misunderstanding and the la-de-da
The basic barnyard bullshit and the blah-blah-blah
Of people who are weak nor think before they speak
(Including me) Adults are idiots you see
But really there are no such things: we all are kids

Our superegos are disused we use our ids
And heaven knows wherever we go the ego
Must always be front and center especially
Whenever it comes to poets and poetry
The greater the ego the lesser the talent too
That is why it is so refreshing to be with you

A Thank-You Note for Someone Who Cared

I was sick unto death with despair
And I looked for someone who might care
Looked everywhere but no one was there
Except for my son and also one
Who has many better things to do
But chose to care for me: that was you

Alone in a lonely universe
Some disappointed and made it worse
One dumped his hostility on me
But my son was here and you were there
For me for grace can be anywhere
And I was dismayed to be betrayed

But not by you: your friendship is true

Transcendental Sonnet #1410
Before September

I have learned the hard way
There is no tomorrow
Sufficient to this day
Its own joy and sorrow

And if tomorrow comes
And if the sun should rise
Blow trumpets and bang drums
To celebrate surprise

But do not depend on
It: today is not gone
Yet: this might be our last
Moment before September

Today might be the past
Which no one will remember

Forget

I lie here utterly lost in decay
Feeling as though I were already dead
As one by one my friends all turn away
Leaving me to fate in this narrow bed
This haunted house the only home I know
I cannot leave them laughing when I go

Not this time as it all comes crashing down
Around me just as Uncle Jack once said
My only consolation is that he
Forever will be far away from me
Because if there exists a place of grace
And I get there I will not see his face
His mocking smile and his bully-boy style
Would have no meaning and be out of place

But what do I know and where can I go?
My life was lived as though in outer space
A silent vacuum where no one could hear
Me and where no one wanted to be near
Me: it is enough it is too much now
Forget what you see forget about me

I just want to sleep to forget somehow

Never Never Go Back There

Last night with sad eyes lighted by moonbeams
Which seemed not for me I lay discouraged
Here as my empathic cat lay on me
Face to face and nose to nose hoping he
Could purr me into better brighter dreams

Now my eyes embrace the sun encouraged
As I blink into light I hardly know
Having languished in the shadow of death
These years: I will dry these tears even though
I have no certainty of heartbeat breath
Nor of tomorrow ever coming yet
I remember life but will not forget
What it was like to live among the dead

Life my libation hope my morning prayer
I will embrace love as my daily bread
And I will never never go back where
The dead things hold sway to bury the day
No I will never never go back there

Walk

It is the intention
Of God for me to live
Divine intervention
Comes quietly to give
Me reason in season
To continue my quest
My duty to beauty
The brightest and the best

When my way is shrouded
In shadows of the night
When my day is clouded
I walk by faith not sight

And in the end I will not fail
And I will get up when I fall
For watching just behind the veil
Is one who waits and knows it all

Since he has walked this way before
And there is none who loves me more

The Little Book of Lance

As The Little Book of Lance comes out
No braggadocio for me
The self-promotional spout and shout
That do-si-do of vanity
Strikes me as base buffoonery

But celebrating inwardly
Quietly then this book will become
In transcendental victory
My handbook and my vade mecum

When I go out I can show it to
Friends when I meet them and maybe you
In the way my mother taught me
Modestly and with dignity

And may the arrogant relent
If I have seemed so I repent
Pride has chased but has not caught me
For first and last I am but dust

Though I could never tell you why
I write my life down since I must
I live I write and then I die
To give The Little Book of Lance a chance

Sorrow's End

You ask me to forgive you
I cannot
I am doomed to relive you

You forgot
Me but it is so hard to
Forget so easy to regret

I cannot forgive you: not yet

Only grace can erase your face
Only by faith can I be free
Of your madness and cruelty

May God forgive and grant the grace
I need to leave where nightmares feed
Upon my heart upon my art

I will forgive you when I can

When grace will mend at sorrow's end
The miseries of mortal man

Transcendental Sonnet #1411
April Come December

Forgiving is easy forgetting is not
Some people tell me and they say it is true
Your life has shattered now and a jagged shard
Is all you have left now so what have you got?

From one shard to another both things are hard
Nor do I have a clever answer for you
I cannot explain but I can share your pain
Because it is my own: you are not alone

Forgiving and forgetting cannot be done
Without the grace of God the forgiving one
But we remember April come December
And when these my words you see remember me

April come December souvenirs of spring
In the dark days we remember everything

Out There Where the Sun is Shining

There is hope for me and I can feel it
Tears to diamonds refining
Destiny unfolding to reveal it
Out there where the sun is shining
I can make a deal with fate and seal it
With a kiss forever just like this

I can see my life is changing
Healing growing rearranging
Things are looking up for me and so
Wish me luck my friends now as I go
Tears to diamonds refining
Where it shines out there for me I know:

Out there where the sun is shining

On Time

for Franziska

I questioned the clock but
It struck me as it stuck
To its tick-tock story
That it never knew what
It was ticking about

So why should I worry
About what something thought
Which never stops to think
Tick-tocking to the brink?

I went away without
The certainty of time
I know what it will say
Tomorrow as today
A pleasant mocking chime

It cannot stop to ask
But answers on the hour
Relentless in its task
Mechanical with power

Ordering the lives of
Those who are not in love

Dark in the Park

Lynx-like tufts of hair festooned his ears
His cheeks were covered with carpet tacks
He unselfconsciously wore his years
As green turtles wear shells on their backs

His teeth were brown and silver and gold
It seemed some spiders had spun his hair
And he never came in from the cold
But he brought it with him everywhere

And who he was I will never know
But then nobody else will either
He repelled but fascinated so
Was here nor there yet both and neither

When he looked in my eyes I could see
That he was blind but had left behind
Back there somewhere all complacency
He was completely out of his mind

How I have tried and failed to forget
His face as he emerged from the dark
That night so long ago in the park
Maybe someday I can but not yet

The Relativity of Reality

What I thought was the moon was a bare bulb reflected
In wavy old glass in the window of the bathroom
Whereas the actual moon was neatly bisected
Flat on one side when I ventured outside of the womb
Which is this place and saw it floating there in the sky

Finding this comforting I was glad it happened I
Made that mistake or I might never have gone outside
This is the sort of thing which takes place when worlds
collide
Light bulbs with flat-sided moons apples with red balloons

Then I ask: Is it analogy or is it me?
Then I know: It is whatever I want it to be

I love the relativity of reality!

Transcendental Sonnet #1412
Two Cowards

He called me a "sociopath"
Since he could not spell polymath
Not that he ever heard of it
Being a blowhard full of shit
His protege tried "predator"
No one had called me that before
But this rooster and his booster

Two monkeys swung down from the trees
To spread their sociopathies
Small predators large cowards these
Two losers who would be writers
Gossiping bantam cockfighters
As fate honors me to my face
Two cowards sow their own disgrace

The Moon is Made of Dreams

for lovers

Though the footprints of mere man are marked into it
Though thoroughly studied and scrutinized these years
The moon holds magic and nothing can undo it
Not dust and rock but lovers' laughter lovers' tears
Above all else it seems the moon is made of dreams

The stars are frozen tears the moon will melt my heart
Tonight all nights our years reflected in our art
If I should die before I wake my soul shall take
The memory of the moon to eternity
Forevermore the shadows of the moon and me

Above all else it seems the moon is made of dreams

Soon

I remember hearing my mother say
Of herself "it is all over for me"
I knew it was true as she spoke that day
When my mother became a memory

I used to feed her ice cream with a spoon
She said "now we are both of us crazy"
I can see her broken smile in the moon
And hear her cry when midnight is hazy

I will go and be with my mother soon
I was so disappointed in this life
No future now no hope no love no wife
Fifty at last and alone with my past

Just one more book and then that will be all
Each moment brings me closer to release
The wind will teach this leaf to fly this fall
This beaten beating heart becalmed to peace

Never Write Honestly? (Apparently!)

So many have said so much about me
I cannot write anything anymore
Without imagining how it will be
To be lectured until I start to snore

The super-duper patriots moved on
Giving up on me no doubt as hopeless
I rejoice at this relief I confess
But here where it is darkest before dawn
As I wait for my last book to be born
I shudder to anticipate the morn
And the scrutiny of shrinkadoodles
Should I post a poem on AuthorsDen

Only my three kids and Freddie Noodles
Understand me I guess and get it when
I write from my heart (which I was taught was good)
And practice my art (now so misunderstood)

Dear analysts: calm down! As I leave town
For a little rest I wish you the best
(And before anybody else has a cow
I must struggle to write something silly now)

I will try to keep my feelings to myself
And shut them up in books for a dusty shelf

Feline Celibacy:
Some Idiot Will Say This is Not a Sonnet

Have you ever been tempted to say
When pursued to avoid being rude
That you are gay
Though you are not
To get away
No matter what?

There is this one: when I think of her
Though I enjoy the opposite sex
I wish I were
And wish I could
Escape her hex
Be understood
As celibate with a big fat cat
Be left alone and leave it at that

Silent Singing Which Cannot Be Stilled

I cannot fail to find the night is filled
With magic bursting at the seams of sky
With silent singing which cannot be stilled
With beauty so intense it makes me cry

The wonder of it all so great so small
The universe within my hand as I
Bounce on the spacetime fabric like a ball
And though I have no wings embracing fly
At one with all with everything the tide
Of time takes me on one hell of a ride

Do you believe in miracles tonight?
The spacetime fabric is our trampoline
Let go and fall and bounce: it feels so right
Just try it once and find out what I mean

And we will never again want to go
Where they only think but they never know
That they cannot know since they cannot feel
The difference between what they believe
To be real and that which is truly real
I want to spend the night and never leave

Let go and fall and bounce: it feels so right
And your mind too will find the night is filled
With silent singing which cannot be stilled
You will believe in miracles tonight

All in the Family

My son the rock star is going to play
Las Vegas where all of the secrets stay

But he likes secrets knowing he has come
From family with more secrets than some
Pezzo novante up there on the screen:
Family business (you know what I mean)
Bobbing and weaving making a living

We have a little problem forgiving

Not always pretty it can get gritty
But it is understood we must look good
Just mind your manners in the neighborhood
Eyes open mouth shut where night spends its days
No one knows anything (maybe crime pays)

I am the white sheep of my family
Fredo... the poet... this misfit you see
But still I remember never forget
And are my children of the blood (you bet)?

So I will write my poetry (just never mess with me)
And if you like it or do not we are polite: agree?

Better Not Read This

Most are only in it for the tax-cuts
At least around here in my neighborhood
Some distant others though seem to be nuts

Their apocalypse of evil and good
Can become confusing in this twilight
It gets hard to tell when they speak of hell
So merrily with their eyes burning bright
Do they like their toast to be dark or light?

But should you disagree they shout: "Treason!
Give me my tax-cut get out of my way
Full-serve my Hummer and have a nice day!"

So we must behave since the souls they save
Might well be our own in the known unknown
Just pray today they will leave us alone

They have those prison-camps for a reason

Congratulations

If you can grab hold of a wealthy man
Well then hop to it go ahead do it
But get to him while you are young enough
And still have your looks before things get rough
What the hell might as well get all you can

The rich just seem to get richer each day
But they have to pay if they want to play
So swivel those hips now cash in your chips
You can always divorce him tomorrow
But be sure to get the cash in writing
Before things go sour and you start fighting

Live large and in charge in the USA
And get it all before it gets away
Be wary of ex-children and ex-wives
As you start your honeyed new-moneyed lives
Later there will come a time for sorrow
And until then some will think you are scum

What the hell might as well get all you can
If you can grab hold of a wealthy man

Two of a Kind

I have decided to live and give you fits
Life is worth all your crap to give you the shits
Why should a good poet commit suicide
When a target like you beckons far and wide
For some sharp ridicule? I would be a fool
To pass up an opportunity like this
I am puckering up my sarcasm's kiss
If revenge is sweet your ignorance is bliss

Of course there are a lot of other reasons
To shuffle back into this mortal coil
The beautiful the true the changing seasons
But I really love to make your blood boil
I vow you will only feel the burn you earn
In spite of this I know you never learn
But never mind that as the blind lead the blind
Despite our means and ends let us be friends

Do you remember? We are two of a kind!

My Monday Makeover

A team of dental experts toiled all day
To purge the imperfections from my smile
Thence I went direct to my physician

My Monday makeover made more worthwhile
Because it placed me in the position
Of encountering an old friend from school

A lady now to whom I seemed no fool
At all and we felt like when we were small
Too young back then but here we are all grown
And all this time I thought I was alone

It only seemed that way but now to play
Again to pray again to thank God for
Today again just what I need no more
No less in fact today is all I need

Life loves me and I love it back indeed
(My new tattoo is healing nicely too)
Today I live I love and I succeed

Moon Walk

I enjoy as I have said
Making coffee at midnight
Waking up stark in the dark
Proving life is not yet dead
Moving to shadow from sight
Straying away from the day
Which misunderstands so much

On nocturnal holiday
I reach out as if to touch
The cool white face of the moon
We speak but we never say
A word yet silence is heard
And no sound is more profound
I will be hearing it soon

Beautiful friend come with me
I will show you: you will see

Transcendental Sonnet #1413
Sung in the Stillness

Given the slightest encouragement I find
All of the vinegar washed out from my mind
And I wonder then where the bitterness goes
But only the moon and nobody else knows

The moon is not talking but we are walking
Together

And whether
Or not I ever understand anything

I can be grateful for the present you bring
In that moment when the breath is suspended
Before the next begins the last is ended
The moon always knows what to say anyway

The greatest poem is silence after all
Sung in the stillness between the rise and fall

Dancing by Moonlight

It occurs to me
I am fortunate
And no matter what
I might as well be
Enjoying this ride

Here on which I find
Myself alongside
You now as we share
Heart and soul and mind

Whether we know it
Whether we show it
Or not since we bear
Burden and blessing
The challenges of
This life which we love

Triumphs tragedies
We are made of these
We pay by the day
It is all we know

No second-guessing
When down here below
Of what is up there
Just wonder tonight
Dancing by moonlight

Stars in My Eyes

Uncertain as to what to do
While my world seems to spin away
I write these lines for readers who
Might never read them anyway
Finding rhyme to be amusing
Measured time made less confusing
As out of place in time and space
I simply do the best I can
As a thoroughly mixed-up man

Yet

Fundamentalist hobbyists
If that is what they are
As they would seem to be
Archconservative lobbyists
If only from afar
Who take things out on me

Get

On my nerves as one deserves
Who roots for truffles such as I
Snout to earth and heart to sky
The wistful twinkle in my eye
Blinks blind as I am going
Into this cloud of unknowing
Into a crowd which is showing
Curiosity with hostility
But with stars in my eyes I need not see

Let

There still be hope in sorrow here tonight
Somehow someday let there be light

The Lifting

In a world of insanity
Anger the order of the day
Futility and vanity
Where nobody knows what to say

And it would seem to you and me
That it would be better if they
Could channel their hostility
Into something more constructive

Come my friend let us turn away
From the bitter and destructive
Dogma and ideology
Which would create hell here on earth

Today let us be born anew

Rejecting death let us choose birth
And this shall be the rise of me
And this shall be the rise of you
The lifting of us gloriously

Come transcend death to rise above
Our fear to hope our hate to love

Of House Dust and Nattering Nutters

fiat justitia ruat mundus

House dust bales itself into sundry shapes
Making it easier for harvesting
Dust bunnies and kittens up to great apes
Which handily drift by in offering
A small convenience for the householder
Distracted or drunk or getting older

Cleaning becomes evolutionary
Humble house dust rising to the very
Tip-top of the tree of society
Where it is finally captured by me
The nutters natter but does it matter
What they are saying and spraying today?

Just tell them to shut up and go away

Or like house dust bale their bile into shapes
Make themselves handy for their disposal
Scared bunnies cross kittens not-so-great apes
Quick with a quip or crackpot proposal
Heaven forbid we ask them a question

So here is my fist and my suggestion:

The confraternity of the confused
Has blamed and bullied us and has abused
Us long enough now rough times make us tough
Real people overcome real disasters
And after that overcome our masters

Freedom of Speech for All and Each

All hail the conservatives
Pickled with preservatives
Of stupid superstitions
Mistaken for traditions

Hate is a tradition too

They dislike the likes of me
And will dislike your likes too
When we frolic friskily
Through their mythic misery

I will not be enslaved by
The narrow and depraved I
Am not here to live in fear

So conservatives: screw you

You will never catch the best
And may you fail as you do
Your worst to enslave the rest

But I am wrong! But you are right!
I hope that gets you through the night
For the truth is something better
More of spirit less of letter

Go have your fun play with your gun
Stay well the hell away from me
Your way is right for everyone
Except for me: we disagree

Now very slowly back away
From me go have a righteous day
Smugly snuggling with ignorance
Go rule the world at my expense

But you will fall someday and I
Will have the last laugh as you die
When late you learn and understand
You were supposed to share this land

With me

Freedom of speech for all and each
Keep your hands off my liberty

Cock-a-Doodle You

past poultry

To all of those cocksure cockscombed roosters out there:

For my sake go on and take her as if I care
Or as if she would be with me in any case
I find your cock-a-doodling to be out of place
And if she is that shallow as to be with you
Then there is simply nothing anyone could do
(How I wish that I could be gay but I cannot
Abused that way as a child I never forgot)

The crowing is slowing but still I can hear it
I want no part of poultry nor to be near it
If you have money though you can go buy hair plugs
Impress your honey with penile potency drugs
A thorough waxing and a little nip-and-tuck
An eyelid lift some botox and a fancy fuck
Is what you get for your effort and energy

Just keep your cock and your doodle away from me

Transcendental Sonnet #1414
The Racist "But"

Whenever people say "I am not racist "but"
Then they go on to prove they are no matter what
They say since having prefaced their remarks that way
Apparently they think those are the magic words

And then what comes after the "but" is for the birds

If you have a bullshit detector as I do
Listen closely after the "but" and you will hear
The self-alleged non-racist pontificator
Motivated by insecurity and fear
Is made insecure by and is afraid of you
And will get to all of us sooner or later

Just remember it is what comes after the "but"

First they flatter then they natter then people die
Above all else keep your bullshit detector dry