

(4 poems of lone-ness)

THE SHOW IS THE THING

The stage of my life having been set
The lines rehearsed and music written,
I stand behind the darkened curtain
And await the cue which bids it rise.

With measured pace I tread the stage
And relate the story of my being.
The house, near-empty, echo's back
And proves that, my story, no one buys.

Yet on I go and tell the tale
Of a life that started at my birth,
And how this life, so enigmatic,
Toward the final curtain flies.

We travel here and see that there,
Intriguing people cross the stage.
The drama builds, then levels and ebbs
As the extras laugh but the hero cries.

A dreary tale is woven now
And the players exit one by one,
Begging my pardon. And seeing this
I realize that the protagonist soon dies.

But through the doors from lobby come
A ray of light so bright and clear,
'Tis a new-comer to the show,
"Some poor late devil," I surmise.

"I would that you had come to see
Us early-on. The adventure's gone.
The excitement waned, and youth has aged"
I stand alone and soliloquize.

"You missed the best part of the show,
You've missed the beauty and the youth.
You've missed the deeds of derring-do.
And this is all your ticket buys.

"An aged wreck trying hard
To claim one final curtain call.
A show that should be closed, an
Actor who should have cut his ties

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With earth already. But waits
For the breath which God has given
To be taken back from whence it came
So the soul to heaven may begin to rise.”

But the lone soul in the gallery speaks,
“The ticket which I have bought
Says ‘admit one’, and to the show of
Your life. I’ve come to see the surprise.”

“Surprise?” says I “There be none here.
The tale is writ and stage is set.
The author now will call me home
Where I shall achieve my final prize.”

“The tale IS writ and the stage IS set,
But the author did not share with you
The ending scene, nor has he with me.
So wait in sending final ‘good byes’.”

And so upon the stage of life I stand
I do not know the line to say.
The author has yet to give the lines
To me to read. I’ll wait for Him.

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LOST

Lost things occupy our minds in a very special way,
Some we long for, knowing well that they are lost.
Some we dismiss after having figured up the cost.
But others, we cherish the thought from that first lost day.

I saw you then (and I took note) oh so long ago.
You had a zippy spirit, a glib tongue, you were easy on the eye.
I remember thinking that your chosen man would be "one lucky guy".
And I confess (from my little world) I even saw you glow.

Like so many things which escape our grasp in youth,
(and we let them go not knowing,
Of the measure of loss in their going)
It would be years before I knew the truth.

My memories of you ebbed and flowed like an ocean tide.
When life was good I'd find myself pondering how,
With any change at all, there could have been a better "now".
Thoughts of "good things lost" I could take in stride.

When life was rough I'd often think of why I'd trod this path.
"Of all the variables of life I could choose
How did I pick all the one's which lose?"
As for counting blessings, it was hard to do the math.

And so it went for 40 years, take the ups and downs in stride.
Your face floated in the sea of things gone by.
Some brought a smile, some brought a sigh.
Thus went my life, until the life I had made - died.

Confusion was my companion after the death.
Trusting nothing of what I knew,
Never knowing what to do.
Not even able to stop to catch my breath.

But, the great healer salved my woe
And bade me live my life again.
"Time" helped me to ease the pain,
Even with such a long, long way to go.

A tropical breeze blew you back my way
(Or did it bring me to you?)
And second chances being few,
I jumped back in to seize the day.

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We poked and prodded and asked and tested,
It seemed good at first but then – not so.
We parted then, though it pained to go.
From my hand a second chance was wrested.

Lost things are lost – probably planned from the start.
When they're gone leave them be,
Or you may end up just like me,
Easing the pain of a life lost by - taking on a broken heart.

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THE POND

Close your eyes and think about -
A day when you were sadder than sad,
When someone had taken all you had,
And all that you could do was pout.
Or, dwell upon the happy day,
The day when "glad" was to the hilt.
When everything that you had built
Turned out in just the precise "right" way.

Now step two in this exercise,
Pick out a word that describes it all.
The order might be very tall
To express the scene without compromise.
"Use your words" the teachers say,
To get the students to self-express.
But a mess may turn into distress
When coaxed to commune in that way.

I dug a hole in my back yard to plant some lilies and some fish.
But what I got from sitting there was more than I could ever wish.
My first surprise was the frogs who came from nowhere to my place.
I know not how they knew to come across that hot and arid space.
But there they were with the morning sun, the water scarce had stopped its spin.
When I walked up to the watery hole they began a frantic "jumping in".

The fish and plants I placed myself, a mix I found pleasing and fair.
But the dragon flies and snakes and stuff found their own way there.

So, I had my world and it had me. It gave me peace and I bent my knee
To keep it tidy and ever clean. I toiled and fretted when I was home from sea.
But the best was ahead and I learned it well
Of the secrets that my pond would tell.

A concrete bench was where I sat. It was home to paper nests.
I'd kill the wasps under the seat so I could sit and take a rest.
Then I'd fritter and rearrange the rocks and wonder where the fish were hid.
I'd imagine being a fish in there and come thank "me" for I did.
I'd shake the filter, muck the bottom, trim the plants and then
Just when I was finished that, I'd start it all over again.
And so it went for weeks and weeks I'd work and never halt.
So much sweat went out of me the pond was nearly salt.

One day I happened to sit on my seat and stare and stare and stare.
Pretty soon my little fish forgot that I was there.
They came out of hiding from rock, plant, mud and slime.

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I found that their boldness was a factor of the time.
The time which I sat and did nothing, just enjoying the spot I'd dug.
It was as if nature and I just met and gave each other a hug.
I learned to sit in quiet, in the sun and in the rain.
When I was finished sittin' I'd sit some more again.
I learned 'bout fish and frogs and bees and things a swimmin' free.
But the thing I learned the most about was the sittin' thing - me.
I learned that I did not have to kill the wasps to sit there in the sun.
I could know where the dragon flies would land (and even know which one).
Which frogs would play with fish and which would be their lunch,
And which fish were the bullies and controlled the whole darn bunch.
I learned I did not need to work so hard to enjoy the spot out back.
I learned that sometimes it takes a rest to keep me on the track.

Zen it is - the Buddhists' say - to become the thing you need.
Sometimes as I sat there I felt just like a reed.

But the pond was too much to take care of so the shovel came out again
And after 3 days of shoveling I had it all filled in.
I miss my frogs and fish and flies and snakes and the wasps under the shelf.
But most of all I miss the time I'd visit with myself.

Words. Words are important to tell this and that and those.
But, more important is quiet, we all need a healthy dose.
Be still and hear the silence - it's deafening, yes its true.
The noise you need to hear the least is the noise that comes from "you".

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HOME IS THE SAILOR

A bobbing dot on a field of blue, under a black sparkly sky,
Moving toward...who knows where and...often, who knows why.
The number of souls on the bobbing dot could be many or few,
But even alone in the emptiness there were always thoughts of you.
I had my thoughts to keep loneliness at bay, you were there with me,
Through flying high, through camping deep, through floating out at sea.

I never thought to pine away while out there on the roam.
I knew that at my journey's end that you'd be there at home.
And there I'd be and life'd be good and as I'd never left,
Never realizing that you were, of life, bereft.
The lonely nights I never knew, they were your cross to bear,
The kids, the schools the leaking pipes – for none was I ever there.

You did so well without me that it seemed the normal way.
So why did it take me by surprise when you told me on that day
That there was no "us" anymore, that we really never were.
From the first trip that I made "we" had become a blur.
The blur had grown and focus flew until the vision of "us" had waned.
Then going through the motions was all in life that remained.

Well, what else is there now to say? You're content alone.
And I'm still out here on the sea, my home away from home.
What? I think that line may be cliché, but definitely not true,
I think the briney deep was home, and away from home was you.
But all is well, you got your life, your place under starry sky,
And I'm still out here headed out to who knows where - or why.