

Triumphs of the Heart

POEMS BY PAULA J RILEY

If I could turn me inside out
Unleash my soul from mortal flesh
That measures my encumbered route upon this earth
Till dust be death

I'd eagerly play blind man's bluff with life
Grab hold a tail-wind that is heaven bound
Abandon all my worldly strife
And newborn, simply feel my way around

CHAPTER I

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

1960s

FRUSTRATION – (*At The Village Gate in Greenwich Village, where I worked*)

Scared and empty
Pouring transparent wine unto the floor and missing the glass.
What an ass I'm making of myself. Right? Wrong? Black – White? Cowboys or Indians?
Decide! Decide!
Sorry, the games over and I played alone, again!
I didn't want to play with them anyway, I reason,
and fail to see the light turn green,
and invariably miss crossing the street in time to catch my bus.
Where did it go? Taking with it everyone but me.
While here I stand, in a puddle of wine,
Looking down at my transparent reflection
with frustrated, clenched fists and legs that won't move – and I yell ...
T A X I !

RESENTMENT – (*In the john at Emilio's Italian Restaurant in the village*)

I wonder how many forevers on the bathroom walls
have lasted all these years
Or bastardly produced what might have been a Sown?



INSOMNIA (*Another sleepless night*)

Anticipated thoughts, skipping to the rhythm of an overtime trio...
STOP!

Relief at last!

But oh the silence and oh, the revelation of boredom.

My mind's dancing to a jukebox serenade

and the barflies have found their temporary mates....

All's well that ends!

Home again with the latest edition for company

And myself, of course; whose course is shaky...

But with a cause, and a pause, and a clause (several).

Good-night Village Gate, maybe tomorrow will be a new day.

A COMMON QUESTION

A customer just asked me "Where's the little girl's room?"

There's one in the Bronx, on Marcy Place, on the first floor of a tenement building,
with bare walls and sounds of contentment, love, loneliness and fear.

You can see all the way down into the alley.

And, if you're lucky, one day someone goes by
and you call from your window...

"Hey mister, dirty bum, peek-a-boo".

Then you shoot him down with your rifle thumb,
just before Grandma calls you in for dinner; while everybody's friend Irma trips up
for the second time.

There's another little girl's room in Forest Hills;

on the ground floor of a two family house (a little more elite, and miles away from the Bronx).

The walls aren't as bare but the sounds are more muffled

and there's no alley and no one to shoot down.

So you make friends with smiles and learn how to lie, and everybody's Irma's friend.

Still another room, but this one you share with a kid sister who never shot down anybody!

Instead, she holds off the enemy...

YOU, with frightened eyes and a plea from an unarmed distance.

Where's the little girl's room? Down the corridor and to the left, M'am!

PITY POT

Round table, not spinning,
 winning little praise from those who use you.
 Poor table, luring people to you
 When the room is overburdened with creeps.
 Oh, here comes a group of decent folk.
 Ouch! Another scratch and oh, the discomfort of a cigarette burn!
 Oops...there goes the seven up!
 Downhill...until, could it be? Thank carpenter!
 They're going. They're all going.
 And in the silence, your momentary shine smiles a glitter and you sleep
 until the creeps come!

ANGRY PROJECTION

Gay – they call her! The one whose eyes refuse to cry
 Because they've never known the ecstasy of living.
 She sits at a bar with her gloating puss and a pal
 Who doesn't think too highly of himself.
 With frivolous clothes and a cigarette
 in a statuesque upheld pinky hand, she speaks...
 "Grand evening, oh darling, do you?"
 But no one hears her screams, so she peeks through
 An ocean of martini's and sips back a sob...mob?
 Maybe they'll notice her. They should, she wore
 her most decorative frock.
 But instead they mock and she hears only compliments.
 For sentiments are a part of the past, now and forever.
 But you must admit she's clever...yes...and gay.
 So gay...that's what that fag is!



HOME SWEET HOME*(After a night's drinking at "The Improvisation" on W. 44th Street in Manhattan)*

I live in a house and occupy a bed.

All else is dead
or hasn't been born yet.

I sit at a desk, half painted,
tainted with memories
that fill its empty shelves.

Oh, how I yearn for completion
now that I no longer can recall
the fairy tales of my youth.

One day I will sit at my painted desk
And after replacing a book to its shelf,
I shall retire to the bed in which I sleep.

KNOWING IT ALL *(At 25 – Duh!)*

I too must have plucked an apple from a tree...

 Unknowingly.

And banished from the Garden Of Eden by time, I wondered...

 Unknowingly.

I sleepwalked through a night of nightmares
And came down a stairway that turned a quarter of a century
into a day of days...

 And now I know.

**STILL CANNOT CRY** *(Living numb)*

Where did the rain of yesterday go?
It fell from the sky to the earth below.
Who swallowed it up to quench its thirst.
And brought forth a flower who's peddles burst.
Where did the pain of yesterday hide?
It's thirst never quenched, it probably died.
Tomorrow I'll water it, I calmly say.
But too soon tomorrow becomes yesterday.
Where did the rain of yesterday go?
And why can't I feel the rain on my brow?

1970s

ODE TO A YELLOW VOLKSWAGEN

(My sister Amy was found in her car at the edge of Montauk – it was suicide – she was 24)

Little and bright,
once a day flight ... away from a world of inevitable night.

Off on a course
of objects and things
full of delights, as if I had wings.
After we crawl and we walk and we run,
and we still find ourselves beneath a dark sun.

There's no better thrill
than taking a ride
And hiding inside
Where you only abide.

In a yellow Volkswagen, I'm safe
For I am what I am,
through the wind and the sun
And I don't have to run anymore.



HAUNTED BUT HOPEFUL (*Moved to Clinton*)

The light in the window grew dimmer, it seemed.
until it revealed to the heavens, its scheme.
The shadows that once use to dance on the walls,
Gave way to the darkness that conquered its stalls.
The dawn that had threatened inevitably came,
And sunshine stood peeking at each windowpane.
Come in said the shadows, come in if you must.
Although you're a stranger, I'll try hard to trust.
Come in and embrace me, though banish I will.
Come enhance this dark room, as you only can fill.

The shadows relented, well knowing they would.

And the daylight ascended and the daylight was good!
The light in the window went out with the day.
Now all who pass by remark on their way...

You can see the whole house...
the old house
the new house
the bright house!

ODE TO GOD (*After Amy's death*)

Where are you?

I can't see you.

Is there a light in this place?

Where's the blasted switch?

I'll find you

I've got to.

There's no one to talk to.

But I must see you, so I can talk with you.

I keep bumping into things.

Oh, all right, I'll stand still for a while

And we can talk in the dark.

Oh, there you are!

WHO (*Mr. right?*)

I wanted so to forget
 But the scent of you on my pillow
 Made me remember
 The night I promised
 Never to forget!

AT A BAR (*Another night at The Improv*)

Standing still but breathless from running a mind's mile
 I equate reality!
 Holding on to nothing, pretending I'm too small
 I negate equality!
 Restless because I'm lying, believing I've just died
 I erase mortality!

A PROMISE TO MYSELF (*Cutting the cord*)

You who begot me, I forgive you your faults
 I haven't forgot thee, but I hear a waltz.
 For the music I hear, which is other than yours,
 SOARS SOARS

I love you no less, but I like myself more
 And for you what's distress, is for me an encore
 Which I hear in the distance and must answer its call
 ALL ALL

Though the start of my journey has hampered my speed
 I am no longer thirsting for what I don't need
 For I shall have traveled, when I leave this earth
 WORTH WORTH

RENDEZVOUS (*One night stand*)

I see your face before me. I sense your touch to mine.
 But, oh dear, I've forgotten your name.

 I hear your laughter ringing. Our heartbeats ever rising.
 It's just your name I can't retain.
 A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.
 Or, rather, the name of any other rose, would sweetly do!



DAYDREAMING (*I've only been to Jersey*)

Mornings of dew, Ancient eons of Eros
statues incompletely whole, yet Holy.

Though I've never seen Her, Greece unfolds before me
Through sounds and feelings, in a restaurant across the street
That used to be a steak house.
How marvelous environment can be,
that I should know a place I've never been to.

I want to reach you, be with you for better or worse,
till death us due part.

Oh life, take hold of me...Shake me awake to your beauty.
I'll wed you, I will.

OPENING UP (*Turn around*)

I am the flood...I am the damn
And somewhere in between – I am.
The damn must burst
The flood retreat
For fertile soil my soul to greet

THANKS (*The comfort of a friend*)

It's Sunday. Sounds surround me yet I am alone.
It's Sunday. Visions invade me, warm feelings of home.
A home I can't describe, a feeling deep inside
that begins to take shape when I picture your face.
It's no longer Sunday. It's no longer winter.
It's only a feeling I'm grateful for knowing



INSIGHT (*Empathy on a train*)

I've seen a girl whose eyes are mad...
They've seen the worst, reflect the sad.
And only that and nothing more...they cannot ever cross the door.

I'm reminded...
I must go on opening every door I come to, or I too will see no light
And always breathe the filtered air that can not, that DARES not care!
For even Her poor soul; I crave to care, for all and every poor and troubled soul.

WIDER (*After a breakup*)

Today was April Fool's day...I was a fool and today I learned I was!
 My rhythm has altered from playing games to speaking aloud to other people.
 I now can let myself become excited and begin to apply the faith I foiled with,
 because it was never taught to me.
 After nights and days and years and eons...It is felt!
 I am growing up...frightened, hopeful but no longer taking only what there is to take,
 as a beggar.
 I have begun to want the possible to happen...even what till now was... the impossible!

AND WIDER (*Awakening*)

A child can see a blade of grass, and make of it a looking glass,
 through which a thousand dreams arise, to marvel at with little eyes.
 The child that lets the hand of time hold fast to hers for life's steep climb,
 will stand or fall but still walk on, through many blades of grass bygone.
 The child that clasps and won't let go, will wither like the grass in snow.
 For even when the season's change, the cold remains, the cold remains.
 I was that child of long ago, who would not render winter's snow,
 But now I want to melt and melt.....
 and let the season's ALL be felt.

CLOUDS

Ever changing heaven's theme.
 Hurling, reeling Zeus's scheme.
 Dancing, sleeping, slowly creeping, puffs of cream.
 That stuff of which it takes a bit to make a dream.

FOG

I dream about another port, a place that holds a space for two.
 Yet in my heart I know in truth that only one boat can see through.
 Amid the fog and starless nights, they'll come a star to lead me there.
 And if I loose my way to home, another port I'm sure to find.

HATE THIS JOB

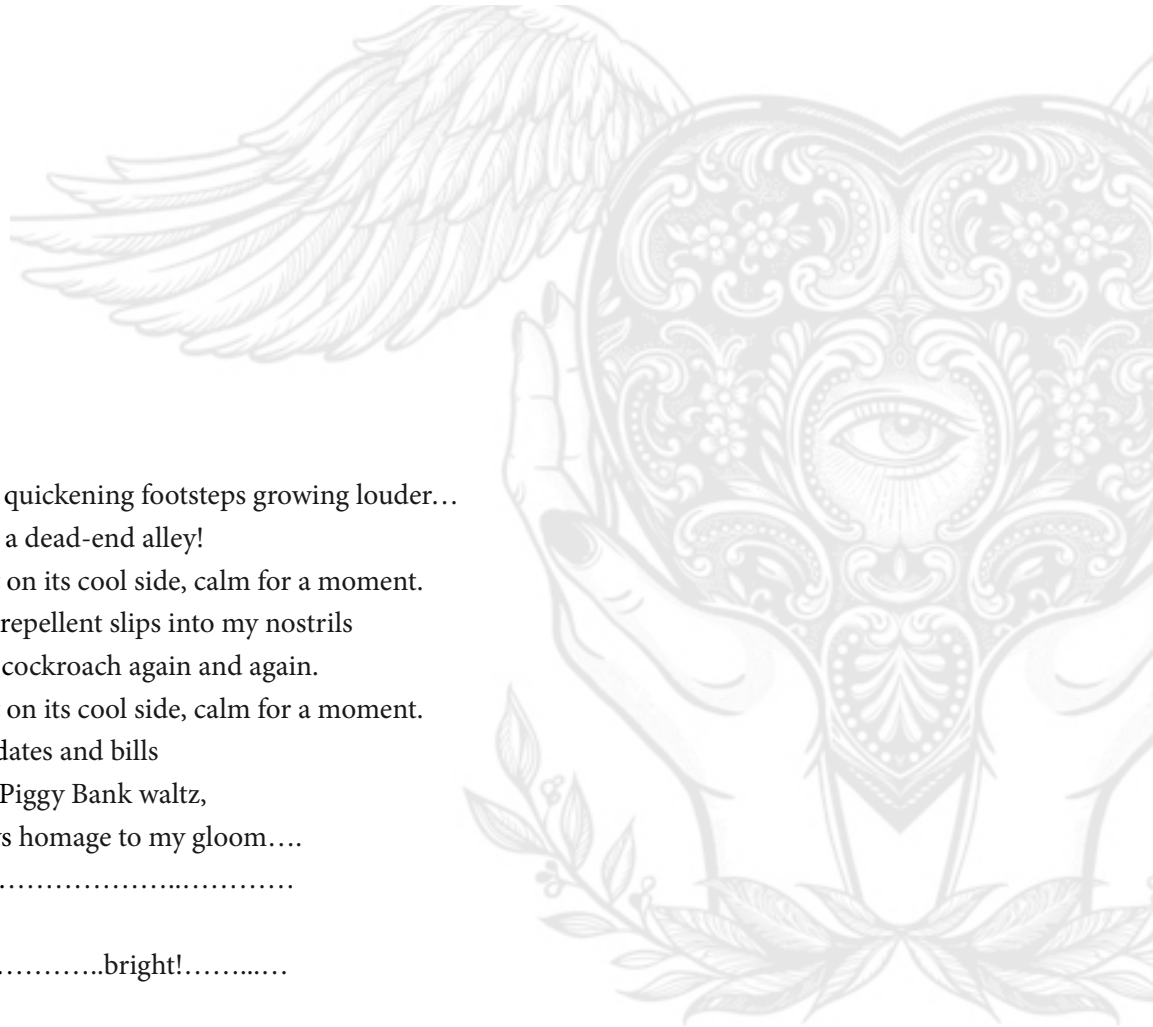
Time, of late, has hung on me, clinging, unmoving,
 Irritating my nerves, as it might a child, unable to daydream,
 awaiting the immeasurably uplifting sound of a dismissal bell

OBSERVATION (*Another train ride*)

I sat the third seat up, amidst a thousand nervous coughs
 that shattered the air with persistent confirmation of life.
 “The good life”, a glance revealed, boldly written on a postered wall.
 We’re all going on a journey that won’t end when the train stops.
 Each of us brought a ticket one way.
 I get off at Yonkers...where do you go?
 Where are you from?
 Do you believe in God?
 Have you ever cried?
 Strangers though we are...I know you all.
 I would like to know you better. My name is Paula. I cry a lot.
 I’m afraid of death too.

ANXIETY (*Nu?*)

Heartbeats, like trailing quickening footsteps growing louder...
 Finally cornering me in a dead-end alley!
 I puff my pillow and lay on its cool side, calm for a moment.
 The toxic odor of a bug repellent slips into my nostrils
 and my mind crushes a cockroach again and again.
 I puff my pillow and lay on its cool side, calm for a moment.
 A coupled ballroom of dates and bills
 dance to the music of a Piggy Bank waltz,
 as their gaudy attire pays homage to my gloom....
 Doom.....
 6 am
 Room.....light!.....bright!.....
 To bright to sleep!



CHAPTER II

FULL MOON

1980s

THE DISCONTENT (*In honor of John Lennon – after his assassination*)

The Lion doesn't ask to change,
the Ant does all he can to help.

The Deer know they must flee to live,
But man alone is discontent.

An animal will not exchange the natural life that nature dealt.
And so they give what's their's to give...

But man alone is discontent.

Oh Man, be Man, just be yourself
And don't ask to be something else,
Or someone else
We're all the same
The Lion proudly bares his name.

The Lion sleeps a restful sleep,
The Ant completes his daily chores.
The Deer survives another dawn.

But man by his own hand does mourn

Oh Man, be Man, just be yourself
And don't ask to be something else,
Or someone else
We're all the same
The Lion proudly bares his name.

WITH HELP FROM RILEY

Alone ... perhaps my destiny.
Should I embrace the dark so there will
be light?
Or should I light the dark, so there will
be me?

**THE WAY OF YOUR FACE** (*With my husband Jack*)

Windblown wheat fields, whistling, wintry snow abounding...

Your Hair

Funny, dancing wall-shadows playing, gentle heart-thoughts emoting...

Your Hands

Defiant, discerning figure in a courtroom...winning...

Your Nose

Benevolent, bountiful glimpses of beauty, countless treasures of untold universes...

Your Eyes

INEQUALITY (*I'm short – not small*)

I looked up because I was too little...
 It was the only thing I could do
 I knelt because I was too grateful...
 And overcome by awe, I fell.
 I stand here now, my hearts-blood pumping
 And gaze amazed at the sky.

DEDICATION TO MY SWEET PEA, BEBE

(*Sprinkling my dog's ashes on an island of grass on Park Avenue – near my apartment*)

A thousand tiny voices are welcoming the day;
 The smell of Spring's a coming in the air.

 The dew I dreamed of seeing, is fragrantly reflecting
 An eloquence of essence everywhere.

 I scattered all her ashes on a place that merely matters
 But to me and to my loved ones, no one else..
 So Spring's accustomed ritual, I finally embrace...
 The rising out of flowers— her sweet face.

SUFFERING SOULS (*A prayer those who struggle with addiction*)

Lost in a sea of apathy, too burdened with despair to swim upstream,

 Some lives around me seem.
 Coping was a time ago, belonging to their ancestry,
 now swallowed by a monstrous thing called lethargy.

 They've lost their will, let go an appetite for nature's way
 And blindly sit among the dead, who's silence cannot comfort them
 but mirrors their dead souls and begs then not to worry much.

AT THE PIER WITH A FRIEND (*With Riley on the West Side pier*)

Lying on my back beneath a sky-dome of peripheral beauty
 Hues, an artist's pallet might delight in
 Peace, a Saint would envy.
 The Yanks just tied...the game's a cinch now
 All is balanced in this breezy, blooming moment
 And time and I are one.



GETTING ON BOARD (*Leaving for the Bahama's after staying at Moms*)

The anchor lifted unto the ship and with it the weight of my soul. And so both ship and my sanity sailed into the day. I left the shore lying on my back, unseeing. For all that mattered was that all of me was aboard!

The blue-eyed love I'd married years before was suddenly and reassuringly by my side; and the wind whispered his name. For the first time in a week I was awake and happy to be. I now know this is how it should be wherever I go. I can't forgive those who cannot feel that breeze, for they betray me, as they betray nature!

The clouds and moon hang like a Dali painting – beckoning me beyond the present man-made time of day and tell me “it's safe to cross the sea for She is my friend and will always be.”

The breeze that caressed my face was, till now, the gentlest touch I'd felt except for my blue-eyes love's hands upon my brow.

**IRONY**

The squirrel swiftly climbed the tree
And peered into a Blue-jay's nest
And found the eggs, the Blue-jay's eggs
That promised him a festive spring

So hidden was the furtive batch
That no one knew the merciless deed
And through the winter they did hatch
And when approached, began to plead

The squirrel let them go, of course,
And due to hunger and remorse
De died a slow tormented death
And on his bones, the Blue-jays fed!



HERE

Like the flicker of a fire-fly
 Caught in the vision of a passer-by
 A transient spirit in a moment's sky
 I was here

Never content to be myself
 I wandered farther to see myself
 And found an image unlike myself
 To help me re-appear
 Then gradually I saw the sun

Rise out of the heaven that I'd come from
 My heart knew I'd return again
 Not knowing how, not knowing when

1990's

AND TOMORROW'S MONDAY

We turned away from sights and sounds too horrible to view
 (and the box played on!)
 and listened to each other's hearts for fear of reading minds.

I said my minds' opinion, grabbed my heart's hand and ran
 Then stopped in time to take a look behind
 We shared a puff of quiet and spilled our souls like soup
 And now our smiles are honest and fulfilled

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF YOU (*Am I the sea or a pool?*)

Pounding, lapping, slapping shore
 Your constancy encompasses more
 Than I can state in black and white
 It makes me wonder how you'd feel at night

Would I could stay by you night and day
 and still resemble myself this way?
 or dare to travel beyond my dreams
 each wave revealing the thoughts of kings

Lapping forward, only forward, as in your fate
 and never fearing being born too late
 for with each wave I'd be born anew
 and there would be nothing I couldn't do



DEEP WATERS *(By the sea.)*

Silence...even the deaf can't hear
 Is what I feel while standing here
 Close to God with my toes embraced
 Like lovers in the sand, encased
 Looking out over the white foamed grass
 While the sun is setting like porcelain glass
 Knowing what God intended me
 To live and love by this gracious sea

INSIDE OUT *(Wanting to start over)*

If I could turn me inside out
 Unleash my soul from mortal flesh
 That measures my encumbered route upon this earth
 Till dust be death

I'd eagerly play blind man's bluff with life
 Grab hold a tail-wind that is heaven bound
 Abandon all my worldly strife
 And newborn, simply feel my way around

**FOR IT IS SPRING** *(and I'm feeling good)*

For it is spring
 What course my soul but to be upward bound?
 To breathe the day into my yearning pores
 And rouse my hapless spirit from the ground
 Until it soars

For it is spring
 A chance to rectify this man-made scheme
 That leaves us dwell in limited pursuit
 And chase a fancy, likened to a dream
 From out its root

The sun, that winter stealthily denied
 Exalted now with royal recompense
 Reveals a season naturally allied

 To heaven's sense
 No wonder than, the God in us ascends
 Assuring every man he can be King
 And for a while humanity transcends
 For it is spring

IN THE COUNTRY (*Upstate at David's house*)

This tar-paved road
 Once, sand beneath my feet
 That with each step
 Immortalized my life
 Now ushers in
 With every step I meet
 A gentler time
 As when I knew no strife
 This country road
 I've always held so dear
 Which I have known as temporary home
 Invariably quiets any fear,
 That I was on this journey all alone

**LOVE ANEW** (*The following – All About Steve*)

I follow the light from your eyes and reach a clearing in the woods. It's brighter here than anywhere I've been before and it hurts to look directly into the brightness. So, begging your patience, I retreat, in the hope that my senses will rise to this blessed occasion. It is the morning of my new life with you, so please be gentle as you lead me out of these familiar dark woods and into the daylight.

A CLEANSING

Overflowing with thoughts of an overflowing night. Showered and sheltered and loved and anew.
 So serious, looked my love; trying so hard to please. Careful and curious his eyes; searching and gentle his hands. Finally finding me; filling and fulfilling me. How I love him.

SNOBBERY

They age. We grow
 They wither. We renew.
 They worry. We explore.
 They shiver. We melt.
 The world around us. We.

SPIRAL

Love inspires. Inspiration births. Birth renews. Renewal stirs hope. Hope creates energy.
 Energy is love.

SURPRISE (*For Steve's Birthday*)

A lad from Columbus dropped into my life
And kept me from loosing my grip

He tickled my fancy and rid me of strife
Went from lonely to happy in a zip

Now today is his Birthday, October the fifth
And I haven't a clue what to buy

Plus he begged I get nothing especially pith
Since his character's humble and shy

So I planned a dinner, with friends as a surprise
Filled with sumptuous food and good cheer

And a "Thank You" as big as the love in my heart
That I waited to give him all year

A mystical day in the month of October;
A day made for goblins, witches and ghouls.

Inspired a party of mammoth proportions,
And beckoned all who attend dress as fools.

Well, we did, and let me tell you 'twas grand,
Every costume was marked with its very own brand.

And we'll do this again, cause its just too darn fun
Plus, we're better acquainted, each and every last one.

**POEM FOR STEVE**

I hope the light I've come to know
Has finally begun to glow
Inside of you

I'm happy that you're on a path
To start to live without the rath
and sadness you once knew

Let's lift a glass or say a prayer
To celebrate a time to care
A time to grow

Let's seize each moment that we live
And offer to it
All we can give

Together we can beat bad times
The hardships, stress
but keep in mind

It's what you give
That you get back
And with each thing you give away
Just know there's more returned each day

MANCHILD

He looks as he must have as a child
Something restful in his face, yet wild
Curiosity mixed with doubt
As if to ask what life's about
My fingers sift his curly hair
He purrs approval – I leave them there
He is my lover, friend and ward
He is my Manchild, life's reward



CATERPILLAR NO MORE (*Gorgeous, no?*)

Twenty eight minutes before I must leave
 Before the appointment I'll eagerly keep
 Before the conversion from plain to pizzazz
 Until the infusion of metal and jazz

Now it's twenty-four minutes I'm aware of the time
 Sensing how Marilyn felt in her prime

Knowing the glances from heads that will turn
 Feeling that magical, magnetic burn

I'm going from what I call "DULL" to "ALIT"
 And praying my boyfriend will not have a fit!

I'm doing what others have felt they deserve
 I'm becoming a "BLONDE" and to hell with reserve!

BEING FOUND (*Falling in love*)

I follow the light in your eyes and reach a clearing in the woods. It's brighter here than anywhere I've been before and it hurts to look directly into the brightness. So, begging your patience, I retreat, in the hope that my senses will rise to the blessed occasion of an intimate moment. It is the morning of my life with you. Be gentle as you lead me out of the darkness and into the light.

RAPTURE (*Our first time*)

Overflowing with thoughts of an over abundant night. Showered and sheltered and loved and anew. So serious looked my love trying so hard to please. Careful and curious his eyes, searching and gentle his hands; finally finding me, filling me. How I love him.

DUH (*Undecided – for a change!*)

Why, oh why, do I do what I do? When I don't have to do, at all, what I do!
 But instead, could be doing let's say, what you do! Or better yet do what I'd much rather do!
 In fact, if I did what I'd rather be doing, I'd finish that novel I started pursuing.
 Those flowers I planted would be in full bloom, and there wouldn't be one speck of dirt in my room.
 The crossword completed, I'd frame it I know. And then I'd be off to wherever I'd go.
 Then why, oh dear, why, do I feel so distraught? Oh my, ... I don't know how to finish that thought?

CHAPTER III

ECLIPSE

2000s

HERE & NOW (*Discovery*)

I live in a society
That reeks of insobriety
That caters to propriety
I live here

Among the few humanity
That suffer great iniquities
From little people's bigotries
I live here

In trying to affect the whole
I lost my sight and therefore goal
To better understand my myself
and rediscover my own wealth
Now – here is where I live

DOORS (*A frequent lifetime dream*)

Opening – closing – creaking – widening
Peep-hole revealing
Seeing passed them – closing quickly
Lingering opened – finding surprises
Teasing me forward – going behind them
Wooden and old and newly repainted
Tainted with memories - still unattainable
Always finding more doors than answers

JUST ME (*Shrug*)

I have a tattoo, I have a cat too
And the people I like are but one or but two
and the places I go are not places I know
where the people I see don't really see me.

BY THE SEA (*For a day – well needed*)

This silence is nourishing my soul
Too tired to rise at 6am
I now feel the day will never end
and am happy in that thought

Eternity and God exercise their power
and I am their willing subject



TRANSCENDENCE (*A realization at an AA meeting*)

Rising out of water – dark like the ominous sneer of the face of approaching danger

FEAR

Wakeful, rustling nightmarish thrashing – threatening the peace that offers rest

RESENTMENT

These moments challenge my calm and still me – a modern monolith of stone

I aim for the blue of the sky that is beyond my sight, but is the goal and reason for my Breath

It is, as I have named my higher power

INFINITE CLARITY

It helps me know I need only change the canvas on which I've painted

And create the colors I prefer – that keep me safe

UNTIMELY MIGRATION

(*This happened at The Javits Center – yet another glass tower*)

Liquid towers stretch undaunted

in the once uncluttered sky

Ignoble and iniquitous they stand

Insensibly their shining armor

mirrors but a lie

While Nature's dealt a fabricated hand

A flock of Yellow-breast Canaries,

chariots of the night

Who find freedom in their taciturn ascent

Are, by the numbers perishing in their flight

With an epitaph that's less than reverent

Unlike the Phoenix who returns to resurrect his soul

Alas, no ashes rectify their doom

So in the name of progress once again we pay a toll

By closing part of Nature in a tomb.

**COMFORT** (*Learning how to hear*)

My soul, however old, has witnessed many loves

Of this I'm certain

Thus my countenance and strength, does make me grateful

I'm happy to be bold, than entertain the shoves

To this my person

But if the truth be known

I face it all alone, but for the angels

Who's whispered words of wisdom

Beg me listen for a while instead of searching

ECLIPSE *(I am a moon-child)*

First, She surrenders...

Engulfed within the loins of Gods
And renders, for a while,
All lovers, helpless in Her raptured absence

Then, out of a hidden sea of black
In gliding, ordered movement
She comes back, smiling again upon the earth

Until, the folly of the gods, in their mystic mirth,
Embrace her once again.

MUNCHKIN

(Having to euthanasia my dear cat of 19)

He rose, step by step
From the darkest of places
A cellar, in which he resided for weeks
Then, hearing his cries
I approached the back doorway
And seeing his face, made a silent decree

To care for him always
To protect him from harm
And tenderly honor his trust

I anointed him Munchkin
My miracle gift
And home we proceeded with gust

Now is the time, when,
with conscious decision
I return him to darkness once more

So I asked of my deity
To help get me through this
And close yet another hard door

And the answer that came
An important reminder of the knowledge I truly embrace
To give with our love is God's happiness
And to timely let go, is god's Grace



CITY LIFE (*Cross-town busses— du-da, du-da*)

But for the buildings aligned like tin soldiers
 My eyes would have swallowed that glowing red mountain
 That giant red sun-ball now setting in twilight

But for the bobbing of heads in the windows
 Those dosing descendents of yesterday's heroes
 Perchance I'd have witnessed God's delicate brush-strokes

But rumbled and cramped amid short-tempered travelers
 Aware of the soon to be darkening journey
 I yearned for one lingering look at that vista
 But settled instead for the mem'ry and picture

BROKERS (*After being fired as a real estate broker*)

These are the people with souls to sell
 The people I worked with of late
 Rather, they're sellers of souls who dwell
 Upon eager souls who wait

But oh, I'd praise and dignify
 The man who admires my prose
 Who'd choose to sell the soul he owned
 For little more than a Rose

THE GETAWAY (*A short break by the breaks in Florida*)

It's early and I'm awake
 I sit and watch your sleeping, peaceful face
 In this place I can rise and greet the day with eager energy

How different I am here in restful natural sands
 How difficult life seems back home
 Amidst the grey and frantic crowds

Where all is lost – at least I am
 While here, I'm found
 And now you're here to share this joy
 If only for a while – I am alive and quiet – all at once



R.S.V.P

(For my friend David who took his life shortly after his birthday)

I take pleasure in responding
To the invitation sent

And look forward to attending
Such a notable event

For is isn't just a birthday
It's much more than an affair

It's the blessed celebration
Of a like I'm proud to share

You're much dearer than a brother
You're much closer than a friend

And my numerous good wishes
Far exceed what I can pen

You're outrageous, you are loving
You are gracious, you are sweet

You're courageous and yet childlike
You are civil, you are neat

You're capricious and tenacious
Always striving and in charge

You are handsome, ever charming
You are chivalrous and suave

So I'm writing you this Birthdays, David dear
Be it number 1 or 40 – may it be a joyous year

**OVERDUE**

(A letter to my first husband – Riley)

It took me this long
To put into rhythm
The thoughts and the feelings
I've felt for some time
To honor your life, and your love
And your soul
To thank you for sharing
The sum of their toll
For making me laugh
When I wanted to cry
For lending an ear
And the wink of an eye
For all the opinions
You "offered" to share
For all the games beaten
Not all of them fair
For all of the things
That add up to your life
And for ever so humbly
Embracing your strife
For reserving your thoughts
So that others be spared
Yet confronting the truth
In spite of who cared
For the memories I'll treasure
The rest of my life
For the pride that I felt
When you made me your wife
You're my dear friend and teacher
From whom I've learned much
And the best part of me
Rings a true "Riley" touch

DEDICATION TO A STAGE *(At Iza Itkins memorial, and the stage she created)*

The INCEPTION once there in the heart of the dreamer

TRANSCENDED by words, to the mind of the listener
Soon bloomed into life, by the hands of the players

The CONCEPTION, a stage, made of simple materials
Which traveled through time, on the faith of the dreamer
Yet remains in the minds and the hearts of the chosen
Well might again rise, as so oft spoke the dreamer
like a Phoenix, from ashes, to continue the spiral

As was first its intention – for the dreamers,

This spiral of wood and of flesh that's eternal



MY MARRIAGES

My first love was older by 22 years
A Father to me no doubt
My second love younger by 10 and I'm certain
The Son that life left me without
If I love again then it will be in Heaven
I'm not saying this merely to boast
For I've married the Father and the Son
So it follows, the next will be
The Holly Ghost

A THANK YOU POEM FOR ROE

Of late I've been visited by the fortune of angels
My doctor, my family, my friends – old and new

Although unexpected, when needing a dog walker
I was delighted I found someone like you

Aside from being a very good walker
And Trouper, my dog, can verify that

Your generous friendship gave more than expected
So welcome dear angel – you've made quite an impact

THOUGHTS

My worth (or worth of any man)
Begins within the man

I believe the quality of “becoming”
Depends more upon confronting
Those qualities that make us “less”

Life is less serious than we take it
And more important than we know

The soul’s hunger is knowledge
The soul’s quest is self-knowledge

A careless word may kindle strife
A cruel word often wrecks a life
A timely word may level stress
A loving word may heal and bless

When you’re without yourself...nothing matters
When you’re about yourself...everything matters.

Life produces
Spirit induces
Love inspires.
Inspiration births.
Birth renews.
Renewal rejuvenates.
Rejuvenation energizes.
Energy is LOVE.



UNTITLED 1

Alit and bright, the fireflies light a path
 Away from night, revealing a healing day

While newborns strive to stay alive
 Keeping the night at bay

A Mother's milk can nurture guilt
 or love or wilt it's possibilities

But love of self is wealthier and healthier
 awakening capabilities

So find and follow fireflies, they'll clarify your every why,
 and keep you looking towards the sky

And keep the night away
And keep the night away.

BALANCE

Do not feed the highs or lows
Just the balance in between
It will hold your hand aft' all the bl
And steadily lead you to a dream

That dream you always knew was there
To serve you when you could not see
And keep you moving forward where
You fill the life that's meant to be

Neither bored nor overwrought
This haven in which one can live
Producing all you ever sort
And all you ever hoped to give



GO GET 'EM MOM (*Before the show*)

Go get 'em Mom
 Show what ya' got!
 You're biz to the core
 And you're ready to trot!
 Go get 'em Gal
 On a mission to dazzle
 Sing out your heart
 Rev up your razzel
 Go get 'em toots
 Strut your own style
 Make 'em crawl in their seats
 Make 'em roll in the aisle
 Go get 'em Mom
 Like the trouper you are
 Who's not only our Mom
 But a genuine ... STAR

VALENTINE FOR STEVE

Dear Steve;
 Though I forgot to get a card
 I know just how you speak
 A card with words by other folk
 Who never kissed your cheek?
 Who never heard you snore at night?
 Or watched you in your sleep?
 A card that cannot hold you round
 And tell you how they feel
 That you alone make my heart jump
 Your visage makes me reel
 But if it's words you want, my dear
 Then I shall quick reply
 And send my loving thoughts your way
 And on, until I die
 I love you, Steve
 God Bless You

UNTITLED 2

When will I again have a chance to chart your face?
 To sky down your hair, or to know the taste of your lips?
 How shall I understand, except through hearing those thoughts you protect from me
 How else should I meet your soul except in a moments mutual comprehension.

How shall I know you as I once did? We once connected and then all too soon that need vanished.
 And what was left was less than passion.
 I want to know you again and forever,
 but I fear you have excepted me as I was and not what I've become.

Can't you keep up?
 That would surely be a remarkable reunion and we could go on from there forever?

FRIENDS

Friends are people who see the self you are
 They comfort without question
 They share without reserve
 They enjoy without expectation
 They lift your spirits just by being there
 You hear them through silence
 And see them when they're far away
 They reside in your heart always
 And appear somehow when you need them
 As you are for them, without question, without judgement
 They are honest even if it may hurt, when you need to be told
 They are the angels we left behind when we had to be born
 And so when we meet them here again, in our mutual second home
 We recognize and move towards each other
 Knowing deep down who we are ...
 We are friends

LETTING GO

Like the last sigh of a dying man,
 A newborn's cry
 The sudden gush of wind before a storm
 A wise man's silent comprehension
 A condemned man's final apprehension
 Such is letting go

**CHANGES**

It is with awe I watch the dance of death
 In autumn

 The bountiful beauty of barren branches twisting
 In the wind

 A thousand dancing leaves bear witness to
 The mystic metamorphous of the gods

 While unimagined colors catch the eye
 And God appears, resplendent in his grace
 reminding me that death is not an end.

THE SETTING SUN

Emblazoned brick appeared as liquid gold
The parting clouds revealed a water-colored sky.

The rain had stopped in time for poetry.

Beauty such as this, can only be seen by upturned heads and eyes
ready for such wonders.

A CAT'S BIRTHDAY

So you think that you're deserving
Cause you purr and bask about
And though it's you I'm serving
You look at me and pout

I grant your gaze is hard to shun
With those golden burnished eyes

While feigning that you're having fun
Your plan's to hypnotize

There's no denying you're top-dog
Oh sorry – make that cat
So forget my jealous monologue
Let's just cuddle on my lap.



FOR DEBBIE ON HER BIRTHDAY

Your laugh endears you to an otherwise indifferent world
Your warmth emits the promise
That you're there
Your heart is like a victory flag unfurled
And even strangers soon begin to care
For even as a child you were generous of spirit
And loving you was as natural as inhaling

You make it easy, Sister dear, just like a healthy habit
To celebrate a life of love unfailing

BECOMING PART OF THE NEW COLOSSUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
 “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
 With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

**THE COLOSSAL BORE** *(For Trump)*

Just like the brazen giant of Greek fame
 With conquering limbs astride from hand to hand
 Here at our concrete gates of York
 A stupid candidate stands
 with limitations of the brain
 Does profess his despot duty as a king
 To build a wall that keeps our neighbors out
 Returning them to their own denizens
 Not knowing what our country's all about
 But he insists on doing “the right thing”
 And I agree the rightest thing to do
 Would be to exile him as well
 And hope he lands somewhere in Tinbuktu

ON THINKING ABOUT MY CANCER

Am I at the end or the beginning?
 If I turn around will my life be the same?
 Some things are still familiar I'm admitting
 while everything I thought I knew has changed
 My body has betrayed my mind's desires
 Although I'm more intuit and aware
 And habits that are fading make more room for
 The many incites manifesting there
 Has this all has happened suddenly or slowly?
 Or is time irrelevant in cases such as these?
 My cancer's not the culprit but a doorway
 To the knowledge of Eternity it seems
 So I take this as a doorway I must walk through
 And embrace it like a soldier gone to war
 For the battle of my lifetime's proving true
 With a passion that I never knew before

**HURRY UP AND WAIT!**

We care about your business
 Please hold for the next operator
 We ask for your forgiveness
 We will get to you sooner or later

You can call us if you wish to
 Or hold for someone to help
 Or select a service to switch to
 So please don't holler and yelp

If you find this attempt boring
 It's really not my concern
 You know I am just a recording
 And you've nowhere else to turn

If you decide to hang up though
 You'll prob'ly loose your place
 You'd best put me on speaker now
 Lean back and join the race

A LIMERICK

There once was a gal from BROOKLYN
 Who all would agree was good LOOK'N
 But when she turned FORTY
 She got mean and BAWDY
 Cause all her good looks started DROOP'N!!
 There are some things a lady should KNOW
 When she's turning the big 4 and 0
 But before you blink TWICE
 You'll forget my ADVICE
 Cause the mind is the first thing to GO!
 Whoever said aging with GRACE
 Was a prospect a gal should EMBRACE
 If you never sagged, drooped or CRINKLED
 Spent thousands on WRINKLES
 Then you no doubt came from deep outer SPACE

UNTITLED 3

Little explosions, exploiting my thoughts
 Leaving ruins in their wake, desolation and hate.
 I've begun a decent that I feared all my life,
 Only strife to look forward to, black, ugly strife!



SILENCE

Silence...even the deaf can't hear
 Is what I feel while standing here
 Close to God with my toes embraced
 Like lovers in the sand, encased
 Looking out over the white foamed grass
 While the sun is setting like porcelain glass
 Knowing what God intended me
 To live and love by this gracious sea

WAITING TO MOVE

I needed inspiration to help get through these days
 I'm in limbo choosing colors for my wall
 The phone sits in two places – both near enough to gaze
 And I Jump each time they ring with every call
 OK, so I've taken up the challenge as a friend of mine has asked
 in spite of feeling anxious I start writing
 I'm only half-way through my given happy task
 When once again my mind gets back to fighting
 But thanks for the reminder – How important to create
 I'm committed now to write a poem a day
 It lifts me up beyond myself – and I participate
 And once again I am myself and well within the fray

I WANT TO THANK MY SPIRIT WITHIN

For visions of hope that were given at birth
 For being of faith and of positive thought
 For courage to face all the battles I've fought.
 I have cancer and am on a clinical trial
 Of a new medicines which could become more vital
 My head is now shaved and I'm facing
 Treatments that may or not work at all
 I thank all the doctors, the medicine and more
 But I cannot ignore— the power of attitude
 It has served me from tragedy time and again
 And has allowed me to shout the word *amen*.

PJ Riley