

# Noon Out of Nowhere

Complete Poems and Aphorisms



Alan Harris

## Preface

All of the poems and aphorisms in this collection were written between 1963 and 2021 by Alan Harris. They have been previously published online in his website “An Everywhere Oasis” at [alharris.com](http://alharris.com) in the form of multiple downloadable PDF books ([alharris.com/pdfbooks](http://alharris.com/pdfbooks)) but never all together as in this book.

The poems and aphorism sets here are arranged alphabetically by title. The year that each poem was written is part of its copyright notice. Please feel free to share this book (or parts of it) with others. The copyright notices are a formality and are not intended to limit free circulation.

The first poem written was “Continuity” in 1963, and the last poem was “Drifting” in 2021.

Alan Harris

## Table of Contents

Click any title to bring up the poem; click title there to return

8-Word Basket	Bond
8 x 20	Briefing
13 Signs of Bad Luck	Bug in My Kitchen
18 Rules	The Builders
Absence	Bunga Rucka
Abundance	Butterflight
Advice	Caregiving
After a Mostness of Hurt	Cat Lying Down
Alma Mater Revisited	The Child
America the Beautiful Revisited	Christmas Awakening
Analogies for Love	Christmas Haiku
Angels of the Sunset	A Christmas Light
Animal Tao	City Spill
Another Dance	Claire de Lune
Another Sonnet to Another Spring	Clouds
Aphorisms from "Poor Al's Almanack"	Colorado Joining, 1995
An Apology for Art	Columbus Day, 1980
April of the Spirit	Come Home to Christmas
Aroma of Duty	Commuter Queries the Sun
Arrangements	Commuting Past the 'Hood
As Below, So Above	Confined
As Far Beyond As Here	Contemplating Shirley
Asking the Quiet Fire	Continuity
At Sea	Counting to One
At the Abattoir	Crack the Sky
Atlantis on My Mind	The Cry of Everything
August Sunday	Dad's Henry J
Autumn Glimpses	Daresayings (aphorism set)
Ball Game	Darkness
Beauty	Death Is Life Bursting into Bloom
Beneath a Flirtation	Death through a Peephole
Benediction for 2000	Deep Coffee, Alone
Beside the X	Dilemma
Bidentity	Divine Mischief
Big Smile	Divine Priorities
Bird Omens	Divinity
Bittersweet	Doing What One Can Do
Blissful Baby	Dollar Dazzle
Blue Sky in Buckets	Door
Body	Dove
	Dove Missile

Down, Down in the Tao  
Dream  
Dressed  
Drifting  
Dudely May  
Easter Wish  
Echoes of Earlville (as poem)  
Echoes of Earlville (as prose)  
Echoes of the Decalogue (intro)  
    First Commandment  
    Second Commandment  
    Third Commandment  
    Fourth Commandment  
    Fifth Commandment  
    Sixth Commandment  
    Seventh Commandment  
    Eighth Commandment  
    Ninth Commandment  
    Tenth Commandment  
Effort  
Electric Heart  
English Teacher Unbound  
Enlightenment  
An Evening Question  
Every Christmas  
Excuse Me, God  
Experts and Folk  
Falls Visitor  
Farmer Karma  
Father, How Can I Hear You?  
Feathered Ephemera  
February Dreams  
Find  
Finis  
Fireplace  
Five Definings  
A Flower for Manly P. Hall  
Flower in Vase  
Free  
Free Now  
Free of Verse  
Freedom Grounded  
Frequently Asked Questions  
    about Christmas

Friendlight  
From Beyond  
Frozen Fantasy  
Gathering  
Getting Old  
Gifts That Stay  
God's Spirit Dwells  
Good Friday  
Graduation  
Grandstand Fantasy  
Grief Is a Thief  
Griefs That Stay  
Haiku  
Haiku Basket  
Haiku Poems  
A Haiku Quilt for Y2K  
Haiku Recursion  
Harmlessness  
Healing Meditation #1  
Healing Meditation #2  
Healing Meditation #3  
Hearing  
Her Grace Returns  
Here and the Ground  
Here at the Close of Christmas Day  
A Hidden Sky  
Homeglow after Visitors  
Honored Guest  
Hope and Love  
Hot Date or Soul Mate  
How I Clean  
How We Came To Know Truth  
Howling at a Real Moon  
Humid Evening  
I, Not It  
Ignorance Implicit  
Illumination  
Innerness  
The Inside Door  
An Instrument of Heaven  
Intermission  
Interpreting Geese  
Introduction  
An Inward East



It All Rises  
Itinerant  
January Adagio  
Jazz  
Job Interview  
Juggler  
July Brushstrokes  
Just Asking  
Karma Yoga  
Keeping Here  
Kind of  
Lawful Body  
Leaf Dance  
Letting Go  
Library  
Listening to Christmas  
Looking Forward  
Love Is  
A Love Song  
Lullaby  
Lullaby (sheet music)  
Luminance  
Mahler's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony  
Making a Tree  
Man Walking  
Mary and the Moderns  
Material and Soul  
May Nocturne  
May Opening  
A Meditation  
Meeting  
Messages from Beyond  
Meteor Shower over Tucson  
The Middle Way  
Midnight in Midwinter  
A Millennial Date  
Monsoon  
The Monument  
Moodrider  
Moon and Mars Conjoint  
Mother Greets Newborn  
Mother's Secret  
Muse on a Moonbeam  
Music from Hannah

Musical Mentor  
My Cow, My Guru  
My Soul Is Something  
Napping in the Flavors  
Needle's Eye  
Needlework (aphorism set)  
A New Beatitude  
A New Fading of Before  
Night  
Night Light  
Night Thoughts  
Nine Steps to a Poem  
No Darkness, No Diamonds  
Nominal  
Notes on Work  
Now, Sweet Now  
Oaks Near Town  
Old Hair  
An Old Man's Fancy  
On Leaning  
One Glance  
Ones  
The Only Christian  
The Other Door  
Our First Warm Day  
Out of the Black Smoke  
Outwhere  
Overflow  
Pain and Promise  
Parting Words  
Passing and Pausing  
Passing Through  
Path  
Paths  
Penetration  
Permissions  
Philosophy  
Pieces of Mind (aphorism set)  
Planting an Apple Tree  
Plowhorse  
Poetic License  
Poetry Poem  
Prayer for 2000  
Prayer in Brief

Prayer of Being  
Prayer of Unknowing  
Preparing the Colors  
Pressure  
Procession  
The Prophet  
Purchase  
Questions for Making a Decision  
Quiet  
Railing West  
Random Thoughts  
Reality  
Recourse  
Release from the Known  
Relief in Relife  
Remembrance  
Restaurant Miff  
A Retreat Ahead  
Ride  
River Pair  
Rolling with the Thunder  
Rose Cross  
Roses  
Safe  
Sanctuary Cove  
Santa's Interior Monologue  
Saturday Walk  
The Scrooge before Christmas  
Seed Thoughts  
Seeing You  
Seeking  
Seeking until Found  
Sensing a Future  
Sentence  
September Fade  
Sharing Copedom  
Shopping Cheap  
Short and Sour  
Silent Exchange  
Siren  
Some Kind of Haiku  
Song of the Sick Minstrel  
A Sonnet to Igor Stravinsky  
The Sound of Dying

Spared for Seed (aphorism set)  
Spin  
Spirits and Spooks  
Stars  
Still Life  
Storm  
Storm Tea  
Stray  
Suburban Reverie  
Sudden Entrance  
Sun  
Sunday Profundity  
Suppose  
Sutra Salad  
Symposium  
Table Grace  
Taps  
Tavern Talk  
Thank You  
Thanking the Sweet Silence  
These Scales Tell Tales  
Thoughtlets for a Quiet Mood  
Three Gingerbread Men  
Three Kisses  
Three Root Words  
Through the Center  
Thursday  
Tilting  
The Time I Was Late  
Tired Minds  
To a Telephone Pole  
To Be a Butterfly  
To My Body  
To My Wife  
To Rolla Swanson  
To Sister Marjorie  
To Sleep  
To Wake Up To  
Together  
The Tortured Joy  
A Traveler's Tale  
Tree Choirs  
Turvy  
Twenty-One Lines of Tree

Two Birds in a Tree  
Two Haiku  
Two Songs  
Two Windows  
Two Wrinkles in Bliss  
Unclosed Loops  
Universal Questions  
Upbeat  
Urge  
Urges  
Ventilating the House of Knowing  
A Vision  
Voice  
Walk  
Walking the Life  
Wanting  
War Baby  
Washing Windows  
Watching No Baseball  
The Water  
Ways  
Weather Forecast  
Welcoming Patrick Keith Harris  
What Lies Ahead  
What the Pencil Says  
What To Do  
The Wheel of Yes  
When Poems Are Still  
When You're in a Frump  
Who Indeed  
Whoever Built Chopin  
A Wiggy Sopsty  
Winter Solstice  
Within Our Keep  
Word  
World  
Wounded Holidays  
Writer's Block Zen  
A Younger Friend  
Yuletide's Deepest Bell

Addenda:

Ponderables (216 aphorisms)

Haiku with a View (29 Haiga)

## 8-Word Basket

(Original 8-word observations)



If you know what love is, you don't.



Let there be three birds in the bush.



For deepest meditation, nothing is necessary--very necessary.



Butterflies around a puddle don't quote any scriptures.



Most of the time you aren't getting killed.



The past is a compromise between innumerable futures.



Don't fight who's right or wrong who's wrong.



Anyone who likes to compliment finds ready listeners.



Bliss without having suffered is a mental confection.



Doubt fueled by compassion resembles faith without pretense.



The last word is never the last word.

Grief cooks a nourishing oatmeal for the soul.



Whatever you can no longer bear, you do.



Suicides can create absences stronger than many presences.



Fear of death is the mother of law.



Indignation that is righteous is usually your own.



Bosses struggle for years to rise into contempt.



Getting fired means you'll never be the CEO.



Gossip is as despised as it is necessary.



Two agree; three harmonize; six acquiesce; twelve stew.



Waking up is going to sleep from sleeping.

## **8 x 20**

1. If life isn't eternal, who cares what is?
2. Everybody's a town of one with no mayor.
3. For long life, inhale each time you exhale.
4. The tongue inside the brain speaks awfully bravely.
5. A grandmother's love could light a large city.
6. Looking within, one sees little, and grows humbler.
7. Each person is a jewel polished by trouble.
8. Consequences teach what parents and teachers failed to.
9. Good people die, and good people let them.
10. Ideas, when nameable, are ready for the textbooks.
11. The server and the served become mutually obligated.
12. Moods enter children like breezes through open windows.
13. One person lies, two people conspire, three incorporate.
14. Fancy dinners taste somewhat of the hostess's ego.
15. Earth life is a carnival for the soul.
16. Without roses, thorns would be out of business.
17. We develop a fondness for people we help.
18. A baby's future lies in its parents' past.
19. Ignoring people's promises doubles pleasure when they're kept.
20. A library contains millions of pages of maybe.

## **13 Signs of Bad Luck**

### **It is bad luck if:**

1. A pit bull doesn't finish crossing your path.
2. Your psychiatrist falls asleep while you're talking.
3. You discover your broker has renounced monetary gain.
4. You receive a registered letter from your spouse.
5. Your dentist starts to plan a world tour.
6. Our President broadcasts a plea to remain calm.
7. Your doctor starts wanting you to pay ahead.
8. Your PC screeches when you turn it on.
9. Inside the company elevator you begin to float.
10. Your boss begins, "You've been a good employee. . . ."
11. Your flight attendant has strapped on a parachute.
12. The neighbor boy always talks about making fires.
13. Your surgeon has a Band-Aid on his finger.

## **18 Rules**

1. Love truth.
2. Welcome folly.
3. Distrust goals.
4. Laugh deeply.
5. Farm money.
6. Die daily.
7. Give forgetfully.
8. Digest adversity.
9. Bury ambition.
10. Scrutinize motives.
11. Carry silence.
12. Befriend nature.
13. Work restfully.
14. Touch hearts.
15. Trust emptiness.
16. Avoid advising.
17. Break rules.
- 18.



## **Absence**

I always thought that you,  
dear friend, had been away  
due to a long, far journey.

I thought I knew you well,  
although I had no memory  
of ever seeing you.

Stirring stories I heard  
about your distant deeds,  
and I felt a link with you  
though never saw your face.

I asked you in my heart,  
"How long, how far from here  
has questing taken you?  
Does destiny intend for me  
someday to hear your voice?"

My white-haired years  
now tell me it is I  
who traveled out upon  
that long, far journey.

Soon I will be coming back  
to share my life's adventures  
with you in a place not  
far away nor danger-filled,  
a place as near as breath and pulse.

I've missed your easy laugh  
and kindly voice, dear friend,  
but soon enough we'll meet again  
to pray the prayers of ancient days.

## **Abundance**

Listen to abundance--  
not only Niagara's thunder  
but two mosquitoes whining--

not only the whoosh of rest  
but the whoops of errors  
and the whew of success.

Abundance is my golly  
and Betsy's heavens,  
but also the sibillance  
of a petunia's petal  
falling into grass.

Abundance roars out its yes  
and whispers yet more yes--  
the best, it is, of the most,  
plus the all within the least.

## **Advice**

The wise man advised his son:  
Get much knowledge and use it wisely.

This knowledge-loving son advised his son:  
Life is short. Get as much pleasure as you can.

This pleasure-loving son advised his son:  
Make as much money as you can.

This money-loving son advised his son:  
Conquer with power, and rule over others.

This conquering son had a terrible defeat,  
had no son, and gave no advice.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **After a Mostness of Hurt**

How after a mostness of hurt  
does flower a sunrise of joy.  
How never does awfulness stay  
where planets are children of stars.

How warmly a candle lights up  
in blackmost recesses of night.  
How grieving and torment give way  
to palpable peace in the heart.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Alma Mater Revisited

The campus seems all hollow  
today as I walk in its leaves again.  
The marching band warms up in the  
distance for a football game of  
whumpgrunters and whoopleaders--  
but the booming band sounds vacant.  
All the music is there--the  
brass, the drums, the tearing  
and merging of harmonies--  
but I am gone, nowhere near it.  
The now magicless bookstore I worked in  
has shabby Shakespeares languishing  
between glossy audio-visual texts and  
sterile physical geology workbooks.

Is the college hollow, or am I?  
I remember classes where  
cocky professors taught  
stimulating sensical stuff  
which flew the way of  
June fireflies after exams.  
Hormone-smitten twist dancers  
flexed and flirted their nervous bodies  
toward flippant connubialities  
while I tried to study my brain into a  
tested heaven of alphas.  
The fatuous sounds of  
today's rah-rahs echo as before  
among stately buildings that housed  
the tenure-drones of worked-over lectures.  
Now, whom are we all trying to fool?  
College is, I confess, as dead in me  
as a syllogism, but supportive America  
of a Saturday puts down its newspaper,  
pours out a Bud Light, and  
remotely emotes from its easychair over  
conference headcrunching  
seen through colored electrons on glass.

Who died? Did I? Are the college sounds  
I hear today on my old campus--the band,  
the cheers, the dead leaves underfoot--  
any hollower than 25 years ago? No, no,  
I heard their emptiness in youth, but  
this milieu quickened me then as liberation  
from a safely parented childhood  
and insurance against an empty future.  
After a full life I would be most ungrateful  
now to pronounce college dead,  
but let us stick with hollow.

## **America the Beautiful Revisited**

America, while breathing gaseous skies,  
Converts her amber waves of grain to gold.  
She logs her mountains' purple majesty  
And risks her fruited plains in futures sold.

How could the selfless pilgrims have foreseen  
The fiscal dust their sturdy feet would raise?  
When did their quest for freedom of belief  
Become obsessed with how much interest pays?

The early heroes' hearts were filled with fire,  
Replaced of late by nuclear doomsday fear.  
When greed fails in these days to get its way,  
Then hired generals flatten all that's dear.

Those patriot dreamers failed to forecast years  
Of lotteries and bets on football games,  
Nor could they know what poverty and fears  
Would lurk in cities bearing brave men's names.

America! My poor America!  
Thy crown of brotherhood is hard to see.  
Thy god is Gold; thy goodness yields to law,  
And lawyers fight from fee to shining fee.

## **Analogies for Love**

Is love a light beam we shine  
upon our chosen few of heart,  
reflected by them upon us?

Or is love an inner sea  
contained by, yet containing us,  
in turbulence or pleasing calm?

Does a new mother perceive  
in her baby's trusting breath  
the force of a new volcano?

As a cup that cannot explain its tea  
or a husk that fathoms not its corn,  
I cradle love as an infinite infant within.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Angels of the Sunset**

### **For Those with Open Hearts**

Some lucky ones have claimed  
to see and even hear an angel  
or a host of them presiding in  
resplendence over countrysides  
or busy city neighborhoods.

Most angels seem to hover just where  
bright meets dim, and rarely show  
themselves to televised eyes  
or eyes that scan stock tickers  
for the best bonanza yet.

Some people yearn lifelong to see  
an angel near their morning porch  
or, ill, pray earnest prayers  
for healing angels who will  
touch them and dispel disease.

Anyone who has a western sky  
and something of an inner eye  
may sometimes notice sunset angels  
in their dance of shifting veils  
above the darkening ground.

Concealed and yet revealed  
in colors you can see between,  
these angels bless in silent bigness  
all whose eyes are listening  
and all with openness of heart.

So subtle are the wings of angels  
that you may not realize  
they've come and gone, except  
that innerly remains a glowing  
which seems just as good as knowing.



## **Animal Tao**

A cat is mostly yin;  
of the Cosmos she is the twin.  
Like the mysterious Cosmic Laws,  
she keeps well-hidden her claws  
until some urgent necessity.

A dog is thoroughly yang,  
with his boisterous bark and his fang.  
Ignoring the subtler laws  
and concealing none of his flaws,  
he pursues life and cats with avidity.

A dog is always searching,  
but a cat is content with perching.  
The dog loves to follow his nose,  
while the cat simply sits there and--knows.  
Activity ends in tranquillity.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Another Dance**

Where are all the little nothings  
I spoke to you  
when we were young?  
I want them back.  
You were so precious,  
sitting there on the porch swing,  
letting me put my hand up under  
the back of your blouse  
to feel the smoothness  
of female skin.  
Where is the femininity  
that I gave you through my fingers?  
I want it back.  
Where is the bitchy grouchiness  
that I gave you?  
I want it back. Give me it.  
I gave you my tools  
and now you do all the work  
and give me your laziness  
and bitch at me for it  
with the bitchiness I gave you.  
Take your laziness back.  
Give me back my tools,  
and go get your own.  
This is a dance we are  
dancing,  
and I don't want to have  
to step on your feet,  
so watch carefully  
as I lead you into leading me  
to lead you.  
This is a dance we are  
dancing.  
Oh, now it's over.  
Clap, clap, clap.  
But there'll be another.

### **Another Sonnet to Another Spring**

Young Aries climbs the virgin vernal sky  
And tickles winter's seeds until they burst  
In bright-green chlorophyllous flame, well-nursed  
By throbs of heat and chill, of wet and dry.  
Earth breathes her gentle procreative sigh  
Into a billion billion eggs, her first  
Prolific breath of love since blizzards cursed  
In Capricorn and cold clouds choked the sky.

When hungry lungs inhale spring's balmy breath  
And birds sing out "Rebirth!" from every tree,  
Our souls trade withered shrouds of icy death  
For flowing robes of immortality.  
We read in every birth a crisp new page  
Of Nature's Scripture, passed from age to age.

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Aphorisms from "Poor Al's Almanack"

Love of looks is love with hooks.



The man who lends has many friends, but he who shares has fewer cares.



Help a friend, a friend to keep; help a foe, a heaven to reap.



A sharp tongue cuts itself.



The best-laid plans of mice and men too often work.



Dirty hands, clean soul.



A kindly word soars like a bird.



A gift inquired after is a gift not given.



This year's harvest is next year's seed.



Give and live; keep and weep.



An ounce of good will is worth a pound of prevention.



When truth needs a voice, silence lies.



The man who builds his own throne rules over a desert.



Greed is a weed that will harden your garden.



Undeserved praise is like a hair in your milk.



If we could "take it with us," heaven would be an awful clutter.



Her anxiety about life's end makes her piety seem like pretend.



Friends bend where fakes break.



Every face is a picture gallery.



Heaven's mansions are prefabbed on earth.



Love and gravitation keep the universe interesting.



The best comeback is a blank look.



The shallower the brook, the more it babbles.



See with the heart--it never needs glasses.

## **An Apology for Art**

Why more art?  
Haven't we enough?

Well, a world of mostly dirt  
demands more soap, yes?

A world parched with ugliness  
thirsts for sips of beauty, no?

If creativity ever ceases,  
that's all the shebang wrote.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **April of the Spirit**

In this April Sunday  
there is pure spirit  
scenting all the air  
like a sweet candle.

Spirit runs through me  
like light through a prism  
and splashes all my glands  
with a rainbow of loving.

Spending spirit is a joy  
and a joke, for no end  
is there to it--  
as well spend the sea.

When my brain tunes into  
spirit's primordial hum,  
there are no surroundings  
but the starlit cosmos.

I sing into the center of being  
whose bud bursts open  
and flowers into a fragrant chant  
for April eyes and ears.

Amen says all, sings all  
that ever will be sung--  
begins and sustains and ends  
our euphonious zodiac.

## **Aroma of Duty**

Easter lilies gladden  
(and teasingly madden)  
the kitchen atmosphere  
as I perform and pay income tax  
duties  
on vocational gettings  
(because everybody  
needs some of what  
I never quite received).

Gifting, I notice,  
pleases the law  
and reduces the obligation.  
"Give and thou shalt deduct."  
As a man receives for himself,  
so must he give to us all.

Around Easter tide we set right  
every least account  
with the mighty US  
and hope no mistake  
will cloud our reputation  
or shrink our havings.

IRS laws embody  
a sprawling neo-Bible,  
rife with moral assumptions  
(teeth implicit and feared)  
about divorce,  
child support,  
medical expenses,  
the rich man's burden--  
tradition all hard-wired.

Inexorably the Old Covenant  
is infiltrating my Easter  
as potted lilies  
perfume my reluctance.

As for Christ, how often  
I am invoking him  
as these tedious tax forms  
dance about under my fragrant lilies!



## **Arrangements**

Dogs fuss with their beds—  
people take out mortgages—  
for a place to sleep.

Copyright © 2021 by Alan Harris, All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **As Below, So Above**

Fragrance from flowers  
already bloomed gives courage  
to the budding ones.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **As Far Beyond As Here**

Perhaps your mind, when still, has reached a brink  
Beyond which bottom, top, and sides release  
Their hold, immersing all you are and think  
In boundlessly profound, peculiar peace.

Set free, aware, and only slightly caught  
Within the web you've spun of tickling flesh,  
You feel you understand why you were brought  
To live within earth's tantalizing mesh.

What sage or mystic ever wrote a line  
Containing more than hints of what you feel  
And almost know to be the life divine  
Which tinglings from the vast unknown reveal?

Experienced have you this thunderbolt?  
And savored have you since then every volt?

Copyright © 1994 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

# Asking the Quiet Fire

## The Forest As Teacher

I ask the autumn forest where  
my grandmother has gone.

The quiet fire replies,  
"On down this road,  
around a further bend."

I ask why she has gone so far.

Again I hear the forest's quiet fire,  
"She isn't far, not far at all."

I ask the forest why  
its leaves are turning color.

"Only to allow their  
falling down to earth  
to make a fertile mattress  
for the winter snow."

I ask the forest  
whether I myself am  
turning color  
like these leaves.

The forest answers,  
"Yes, your life is cyclical,  
like that of leaves,  
and all you've done  
will fall away  
to fertilize your  
next encounter  
with the summer sun."

I ask why there is  
human pain and error.

Soon the forest says,  
"There is a larger scheme  
within which solitary lives abide.  
My scattered twigs may fall,  
whole trunks break off,  
but underneath these failures  
lies an all-embracing safety.  
Twigs born high fall low,  
and so it is with human beings,  
but pain and error feed  
the healthy breathings, in and out,  
of greater lungs than yours."

I ask how trees remember  
where their sap is kept in winter.

Patiently the forest says,  
"Communities of roots  
contain an underknowing  
as to where all sap  
and nourishment belong,  
just as your deepest sleep  
allows reentry into wakefulness  
with no lost memory  
and even increased energy.  
You move about, and yet  
your rootedness remains."

I ask the forest how  
disease and selfishness  
can be allowed  
within the same grand scheme  
that makes a splash of colors  
beautify the autumn months.

The forest turns my vision  
to a tree half-fallen,  
yet held up by neighbor trees.  
It then inquires of me,  
"If all were health,  
then where would people learn  
the golden art of altruism?"

I ask the forest why  
some people suffer  
from events they've  
had no part in causing.

Pausing at this question,  
it replies, "Like forest life,  
humanity is fully interwoven.  
Say that I'm a healthy branch  
but on a sickly tree,  
and fall to earth one day  
along with this whole tree  
whose weakness in the trunk  
gives way to heavy winds.  
But I'm not just this hapless branch,  
now fallen in my prime--  
I'm also Forest as a whole.  
The spring will see me sprout again  
as leaf or branch exactly where  
some sapling may have need of me."

I ask the forest  
to suppose all trees  
were burned away,  
and every human died--  
what then?

"You ask me more  
than forests know,  
but never doubt

with such an earth as this,  
where air and water flow,  
where soil and lightning meet--  
that here the Silent Force  
may manifest itself as life,  
and grow again.

In fact, my roots feel far  
beyond their depth  
to areas of sustenance  
where life is all there is."

I ask the forest who it was  
that made this scheme  
of life and death.

I look at trees and sky and soil  
while waiting for an answer.

All around and all within  
is silence.

Copyright © 1997 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## At Sea

I work very hard and I tire--  
when will this work be done?  
I long for sweet enlightenment  
to provide a blissful rest.

*If contentment is enlightenment,  
then a cow is Buddha. Rest, yes,  
but within the work is the bliss.  
Just smell any swamp in repose.*

I want to walk the path  
but how without a teacher?  
So many paths are beckoning  
that I'm at sea with confusion.

*At sea is a good place to be  
beneath millions of stars,  
each at one time bewildered  
but now guiding your journey.*

I feel that I may be ready  
but the teachers appearing seem  
prophets eyeing their profits,  
unschooled in even honesty.

*Will your teacher knock at your door?  
Be found on some random sidewalk?  
Have you listened? Inwardly heard?  
Serve and create; serve and listen.*

## **At the Abattoir**

Splat.  
Grunt.  
Plop.

We feed the world,  
Except for bloodless vegetarians.  
Come hither, sweet swine,  
And we will make you useful,  
Oh, so useful to mankind:

Thud.  
Rip.  
Crack.  
Slit.

Cow, your life-long destiny is consummated here.  
Your epitaph reads "Grade A, choice;"  
Your burial ground, the maw of man,  
Is decorated with two rows  
Of tombstone teeth.

Remember, as you face the club,  
Your life perhaps has been in vain,  
But not your death.  
You die to serve a greater cause than you:  
The betterment of man, who talks and reads.

Chop.



## **Atlantis on My Mind**

The existence of Atlantis,  
like that of God,  
is debated by the wise  
and the foolish.

I could think that evil  
was powerful enough,  
when really horrid,  
to pull down a continent,  
with God's able help.

Kings are human enough  
to go completely sour,  
and priests corrupt the boys  
to Papal tones of "tut-tut."

Evil isn't overlooked, but  
is tucked away in cosmic  
folds for later outworking  
as with a storage battery.

Atlantis had a big problem,  
and we here have our deeds  
of various darkness and light,  
unable to weigh the whole.

We have and will have help.

## **August Sunday**

Pounding hammers sing  
along with church choir anthem--  
confusing rhythms.

Depth of azure sky  
recedes to far galaxies  
behind daylit moon.

A leaf waves gently  
in a breath from summer's lungs,  
then hangs green and still.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Autumn Glimpses

Autumn's puffy wind  
tickles my maple silly--  
the leaves die laughing.



Lifelong summer's leaves  
flutter down through fall's abyss  
to safe root places.



Through deep leaves we tread,  
seashore sounds in mid-forest  
rasping at our feet.

## Ball Game

He came home from school and slammed the front door  
from habit.

"Mom," he called.

"Yes?"

"Where's my baseball and bat and glove?"

"I don't know. You'll have to look for them."

"Okay."

He rummaged in the kitchen closet for a minute or two  
then walked heavily across the kitchen.

"Did you find them?" he heard from upstairs.

"Yes, Mom. Thanks."

He walked out the back door empty-handed  
and walked due north for what seemed to be  
two or three hours.

He kept his path as straight as he could  
and climbed over fences  
and other obstacles.

He even swam across a creek or two—  
or waded, one.

He sort of flapped his arms and sort of flew up  
above the whole town and sort of looked around  
and was glad that he could fly and no one else could.

But then all of a sudden  
the novelty sort of fell off the whole thing

so he flew down  
and landed in the back yard  
and walked into the house  
and slammed the back door sort of hard

and she said  
did you have a good game  
and he said yes.

## **Beauty**

Soon after sundown tonight  
leftover orange fades upward  
into night's deepening blue  
above our row of poplars.

How does a sky do this?  
It looks so easy.  
Such beauty is free to see  
yet invites a seeing into.

Who is living behind this beauty?  
No name is being spoken to me  
but there's an inner rush as if  
some Friend from space is near.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Beneath a Flirtation**

A trembling in your hand  
as you speak with it  
tells me a story far deeper  
than the message in your voice.

Your eyes glance to the side  
then bounce back to our center,  
penetrating my defenses  
with a direct melt.

Clever words dance about  
your acrobatic tongue,  
and we laugh at their ballet  
when the sentence ends.

Where is your soul hiding  
inside this communication?  
What messages are you  
sublimating into my inner ear?

I'm hearing a cry for help and love  
from deep inside your lilting voice.  
I would offer to rescue you,  
but I'm nowhere safe myself.

Let us just enjoy our fan dance  
of foxy phrases and fencing eyes,  
of flashing hands and smiles,  
of gambling give and tricky take.

Quickly as our conversation may  
cavort and twist and frolic,  
its loving undermeaning remains  
calm as Mona Lisa's smile.

## **Benediction for 2000**

Long beheld, this cosmic date  
brought in a spook named Y2K  
and a few predicted woes,  
but still we move along,  
up, beyond, in,  
planting fresh creative seeds,  
casting away old husks,  
dropping vestigial outlooks  
because lacking in heart or  
confined to the seeable or  
opposing a grander flow.

Busy in a planetary spiral  
around day's fiery light,  
we persist in our journey  
toward an infinite unknown,  
trusting that humanity's  
third-millennial lungs  
will always find new vigor  
while blowing away  
the dismal dust of death.

We feel deep awe for all  
that has ever happened  
but marvel even more that  
anything at all can happen.  
Infused and confused within  
the unfolding Cosmic Aim,  
we seal our past in glass  
and welcome, as all there is  
and will be, our future.

## **Beside the X**

Today I opened  
a checking account,  
helped by a friendly  
banker lady who  
pointed to all the X's.

She took my driver's  
license and called  
a phone number  
to make sure  
people think  
I'm honest.

After the bank finally  
permitted me to let it  
profit from my money,  
I walked outdoors  
with only lockbox keys  
and deposit slip as  
evidence of worth.

How many bank accounts  
will I end up having?  
Is this one the last?  
(I get like this sometimes.)

After I'm finished,  
will someone empty  
the lockbox for me?  
Turn in both keys?

Will a bank clerk  
close my account  
efficiently while  
planning dinner?

Will the friendly  
banker lady be  
pointing to X's  
for someone new?

Will anyone know  
what's beside my X  
as it goes through  
the shredder?



## **Bidentity**

Beware, They warned;  
Scoff, We scorned.  
A pernicious disparity of essences shall be thy blight, said They;  
Love merges divisions to conquer all, We Two replied.

Time wore on and us.  
Time found our seaming,  
Rotted away the silly thread,  
Laid bare two essences, unjoined.

We cried, Woe: We lie in the palpitating entrails of  
Circumstance, never to be ejected: Woe.  
Then stopped.  
Reasoned:  
Who despairs at one disparity  
Must perish in a human crowd.  
Traded a sob for a synthetic:  
Be, difference;  
Viva.  
For now we are a pair.

## Big Smile

Big Bang  
is a fashion  
of imposter  
proportions,  
insultingly  
pat.

If true,  
where did it  
happen and  
where were  
all the other  
wheres where it  
didn't happen?

Simple theory,  
it is,  
suspiciously  
reminiscent of  
how each body  
of us is a  
big bang  
out of  
our mother.  
Presto.  
Pat.

Four questions:

Is all that exists  
and all that insists  
atomic?

What universe  
did our universe  
outbang from?

Was there love  
pre-bang?

Was there wine  
at a quarter till time?

Observers delight  
to tinker with  
hunks big and tiny,  
but couldn't folks ask if  
a grand benevolence  
flowing beneath  
and between  
all hunkness  
smiled atoms  
into every allness,  
big bang or no?

Could that Big Smile  
be lightlessly glowing  
through all times of time  
as ungenesised Watcher,  
bemused by  
flashchanging  
its cosmic clothing  
behind screens  
of stars?

The Big Bang's surmise  
makes a neat stitch in time,  
but the Big Smile  
feels more like eternity.

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Bird Omens**

When you go for a walk  
in your nearby forest,  
you see pairs of cardinals  
and thrill to their singing.

One time you overheard  
two owls conversing  
between bare trees.

In summer you have  
stared breathless  
at a heron standing  
Samadhi-like  
beside your lake.

Birds of beauty  
want to be near you.  
Your heart flies up  
with these fliers  
and knows into  
their knowing.

Today as I walked  
across an open field,  
hundreds of crows  
flew overhead,  
snidely cawing from  
confusing clouds  
of cacophony.

After they were gone,  
I walked on in silence  
and knew nothing.

## **Bittersweet**

You hurt and struggle.  
You are ripped apart  
like a coupon out of a newspaper.  
How can you or I mend you?

When the spirit bleeds,  
words are worthless,  
sympathy simpleminded,  
blessings empty.

I hurt too.  
My soul slogs along under  
fearsome boredom  
and capricious desires.

I am a blip in a flippant universe  
wishing for an exciting peace,  
a pleasant insecurity,  
but I waste away in dull comfort.

Cry your tears into this saucer  
as I cry mine there too.  
Let us mix them now together  
and drink a quaint communion.

We may be maudlin,  
stupid and sentimental,  
but love tasted in tears  
is heady wine against sorrow.

## **Blissful Baby**

New in a pink body  
now plied with milk,  
you sleep somewhere  
beyond vulnerability.

Where do you go?  
What are you seeing?  
Weary parents envy  
your guarded nirvana.

Copyright © 2005 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Blue Sky in Buckets**

I asked the blue sky today  
why people suffer.  
It must not have known,  
for it just stayed blue.

I asked my friend  
why people suffer.  
He said because they try  
to stuff the blue sky  
into their little buckets  
and fail.

But the blue sky comes all  
the way down to the ground.  
It fills every bucket that's not full  
of something else already.

So how do we not suffer?  
Just dump out our buckets  
and breathe easy.  
No stuffing necessary.

## **Body**

If you have  
a body,  
you'll be fine.

If you are  
your body,  
trouble ahead.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **Bond**

I  
am the  
you  
that you can't  
control.

You  
are the  
I  
that I can't  
admit.

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Briefing

Here is who you will be:

I. M. Ego  
#1 My Place  
Selfville, Body

Remember your address  
and don't neglect  
to decorate your walls and  
keep your place unsoiled.

You need to live here, yes,  
because your past exertions  
somehow built this place  
according to your own design.

Here you'll be safe,  
with one catch--  
you may not think  
you are.

"Ego" has grown to be  
an ugly word,  
you'll notice, but it  
only means your walls.

How could you reach  
a later hatching into light  
if forced to learn and grow  
unsheltered by these walls?

Now go, be, love, talk,  
laugh, err, create, teach,  
glimpse and lose and  
glimpse the light again.

Anything is permissible but  
everything is accountable  
while living in this dwelling  
that restrains while it protects--

until the day you hatch  
into the waiting sunlight  
with a realized reaping  
and a grateful weeping.

## **Bug in My Kitchen**

Let me guess,  
box-elder bug  
on my kitchen floor,  
that you know neither  
how you came  
to be lost in here  
nor how you will  
get out--but you will.

Fright-propelled boat,  
six-oared, you worry  
the woodwork then  
hasten across  
the open gloss  
and disappear  
beneath my stove.

I shall not hunt you  
nor shall we ever  
meet again.

I am just as adrift  
on this waxed world  
as you were on my floor,  
and yet I feel certain  
I will someday find  
a serendipitous stove  
to mask my out-passing.

## **The Builders**

Temple: none but spirit  
Book: an open heart  
Mission: help to give  
Path: up past the known

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Bunga Rucka**

We are murmurs we know nothing  
Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka  
We live down above exactness  
Nothing say we nothing say we

Here between between we listen  
Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka  
Nothing here no nothing here  
Below the Bunga Rucka line

No speaking here no words not one  
No thinking down in under here  
More underneath than want or wish  
Where where is never when is nowhere

Happy laughter high and deep goes  
Snortle chortle yukka yukka  
Sweet it sounds above our silent  
Seepings in and in and in where

Bunga Rucka know no knowledge  
Bunga Rucka love all loving  
Bunga Rucka shine all darkness  
Bunga Rucka shout all silence

Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka  
Feel us in you Bunga Rucka  
Feel you in us Bunga Rucka  
Bunga Rucka Bunga Rucka

## **Butterflight**

A new monarch  
just out of its cocoon  
flits over the yard  
over the city park  
over sweet marigolds  
over two boys playing catch  
over a white-haired man  
working on his 1966 Chevy  
over an Amway salesman  
with his bulging briefcase

back and fitfully forth  
dodging into a rose bush  
sipping necessary nectar  
flying quickly up again  
over lawns and fences

never to be seen twice  
by surprised admirers  
along its jerky flight  
to a final destination  
farther away than  
anyone can imagine

## Caregiving

As one ages,  
so do others  
in the family  
of humanity  
who need help  
continuingly.

How say no  
to those who  
can't or won't  
help themselves?

If I were they,  
would I not  
reach out for  
a helper's hand?

It is too hard  
to be too hard  
when the heart  
is called upon  
to be softer.

## **Cat Lying Down**

When my cat lies down,  
it is with utmost  
gravity.

No circular trampling first  
like a clumsy canine,  
no great sigh  
like a human  
being on a couch.

My cat lies down slowly,  
naturally,  
smoothly,  
participating with  
controlled abandon  
in a dignified  
gravitational event.



## The Child

*Hello, little man, what are you doing here?*

I just want to have a part in your life.

*What would you like to do?*

I would like to play and laugh.

*How would you propose we do that?*

Just throw everything up in the air sometimes, and let it all go.

*No, we can't do that. It wouldn't be respectable.*

Well, I want to play, and you won't let me.

*OK, then, let yourself play a little. I'll look the other way.*

I'll play over here in the corner with my sand toys.

*Who are you? Why are you in here wanting to play?*

I'm just somebody who is here like you are. We're here together.

*Would you like to ride on my shoulders?*

Yes, that would be fun.

*OK, up you go.*

Now we're really high, aren't we? I like this.

*You have to sit still. I can't hold you if you're wiggling around.*

Wow! This is fun. Why don't we do this all day?

*I might get tired. Besides, what would people say if I had you all day?*

They might say you were having fun.

*Yes, this is kind of fun. Let's do this some more.*

Now you can put me down. That's enough fun.

*Who are you? You look familiar.*

I am you before you got respectable.

## Christmas Awakening

From the mantel, stockings  
packed with Christmas  
tinyness and sweets  
dimly hang at 3 a.m.

Cold wind outside  
shakes and snaps the house.  
The dog is asleep on the couch.

This artificial tree, lights off, points  
second-floorward with wrapped  
bounty beautifully beneath it,  
testimony that goods are good  
and glitter is better.

The dog sighs and turns over.

From underneath,  
the furnace exhales warmly  
upon tree ornaments  
livingly aquiver.

All else is motionless,  
and less,  
except for the dog  
now snoring on the couch.

What if this--  
right here, this instant--  
is Christmas?

What if this quiet room  
is flooded with the future?

What if an unseen star  
is shining here,  
lighting the way  
to a new beginning?

What room, I wonder,  
is this? Do we have here  
a manger?

The dog sleeps deeply.  
The room is ready.  
One waits.

## Christmas Haiku

Ice on pine needles--  
can it hear the Christmas bells?  
Can anything not?



Spider in the drain--  
Christmas whoops in the parlor--  
silent, dark, the drain.



Scrub Christmas tree, bare--  
rooms echo--furniture gone--  
mother and child laugh.



Sleigh ride all finished--  
the mare, eating Christmas oats,  
hears house noise, and snorts.



Flashing Christmas lights  
entrance three speechless patients  
slouched in parked wheelchairs.



Tree's all taken down--  
year's end--where is Christmas now?  
Deep within each pulse.

## **A Christmas Light**

At Christmas some will doubt--  
they'd rather see first-hand  
the legendary holy child  
than hear fine stories told.

Some legends place a star  
above the manger scene  
to be a beacon guide  
to men who had wise gifts--

but if a body of heaven  
were wanted to remind folks  
nowadays of this child  
who was gifted and gave,

why not the unassuming moon,  
whose quiet beaming gives  
us all an inner warmth  
akin to Yuletide happiness?

Humbly shines this second light,  
relaying solar guiding rays  
to people lost within a night  
who wish to find a path.

Who hasn't sometimes wished  
to thank the moon for glowing  
above a ride back home  
from church on Christmas Eve?

The lowly moon a Christmas light?  
How daily seem its rays to us--  
no special star sent from afar  
that never will be seen again.

If peace and softness were  
required, the moon has both.  
If mystery were needed,  
where could more be found?

Perhaps someone is in the moon,  
as nursery rhymes suggest--  
let's grant this may be true,  
and this man or woman is you.

The moon inside you is  
your inner manger birth,  
and you inside the moon  
shine gifts upon the earth.

## City Spill

Chicago traffic this morning  
roars and beeps  
like a cheap video game.

Freakishly, at Wells and Adams,  
a speeding bicyclist's paper sack  
spills his stash of shiny bagels  
all over Wells Street.

Heads turn.

Two dozen bagels kiss the street  
at crazy angles,  
then goofily twirl on empty centers  
until gravity calms them down  
in front of some cars at the light.

The bicyclist jerks his vehicle  
over to the curb while hissing  
inaudible words of concern.

Wells Street, now set like  
a sudden breakfast table,  
displays to the public  
a tasty temptation  
with not one taker.

Idling cars restrained  
before the strewn bagels  
by a red light  
now turning green  
begin to roll bagelward.

As if witnessing  
a friend's execution,  
the bicyclist clutches  
his empty sack and  
glares with grim indignity  
at the squashings.

## **Claire de Lune**

Uncle Bill's piano rolls mellowly along,  
Touching dim moods and whispering old warmth.  
In its ethereal arc outside the window  
The full moon is smooth and slow.

As Uncle Bill's fingers coax the keys  
His cigar in the heavy green ashtray  
Emits a flimsy plume of fragrance.  
The smoke, like Debussy's essence,  
Rises straight up and flutters a bit  
Before it disappears.

Aunt Martha's supper dishes  
Clatter a counterpoint in the sink.

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

# Clouds

## A Study in One Act

I've opened the curtain of my east window here above my desk, and I sit now in a holy theater before a sky-blue stage. A little cloud above the neighbor's trees resembles Jimmy Durante's nose for a while, then becomes amorphous as it slips on north. Other clouds follow, big and little and tiny on their march toward whereness. Wisps of them lead or droop because there must always be leading and drooping.

The trees seem to laugh at the clouds while yet reaching for them with swaying branches. Trees must think that they are real, rooted, somebody, and that perhaps the clouds are only tickled water which sometimes blocks their sun. But trees are clouds, too, of green leaves--clouds that only move a little. Trees grow and change and dissipate like their airborne cousins.

And what am I but a cloud of thoughts and feelings and aspirations? Don't I put out tentative mists here and there? Don't I occasionally appear to other people as a ridiculous shape of thoughts without my intending to? Don't I drift toward the north when I feel the breezes of love and the warmth of compassion?

If clouds are beings, and beings are clouds, are we not all well advised to drift, to feel the wind tucking us in here and plucking us out there? Are we such rock-hard bodily lumps as we imagine?

Drift, let me. Sing to the sky, will I. One in many, are we. Let us breathe the breeze and find therein our roots in the spirit.

I close the curtain now, feeling broader, fresher. The act is over. Applause is sweeping through the trees.

## **Colorado Joining, 1995**

*Jim & Annette Campbell*

*Greg & Lois Harris*

*Art & Jeanette Mark*

*Ralph & Jeanne Wiley*

*Alan & Linda Harris*

Five couples,  
each married within a love  
they cannot explain--

Five couples,  
amply tested by fear and the unexpected--

Five couples,  
totaling more than 500 years  
on this sweet, dangerous earth--

Five couples,  
homes scattered across the map  
like peppers across a pizza--

Five couples  
congregated for a week in the same house  
like ten peas in a pod--

Five couples  
who know the grieving and groaning of loss--

Five couples  
who know the ecstasy of tearful laughing--

Five couples  
discovering their unknown way  
as they walk together  
in grace and joy and love.



## **Columbus Day, 1980**

There are no poems now.

Now there is a hypnotic hum,  
A purr of the practical.

I could have written about  
The soft tomblike canyon  
We walked in today.

I could have captured three chipmunks  
In a verbal cage somehow.

There could have been quaint failures  
At describing gold-plated trees.

Irony might have jailed the camera-clicking  
Kid-solders bepeopling the park.

A childish whoop reverberating  
from the bottom of the canyon  
Could have lingered at the end of the poem.

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Come Home to Christmas**

If worldly searching brings no lasting joy  
or grasping ego causes loss of friends,  
come home to Christmas.

If monetary loss appears long-term  
or health is gone and only pain remains,  
come home to Christmas.

If grief or sadness overwhelms your soul  
for no one can replace a loved one lost,  
come home to Christmas.

If winter in your life hides warmer times  
and no one seems to feel the cold you feel,  
come home to Christmas.

If family has disappeared from view  
and memories offer nothing but a void,  
come home to Christmas.

It is an inner place where calm awaits—  
a comforting and ease for misery.  
Come home to Christmas.

## Commuter Queries the Sun

My trusty train  
hauls me orangeward  
from this 5 o'clock  
plastic city into  
an on-time sunset.

Fried-egg friend,  
over easy  
in the wispy west,  
innerly whisper me  
what you are.  
A star?  
Yes, but are  
you a you  
or merely a major it?

May I commune  
with you in  
the hollow of  
my heart?  
Dissolve shallow  
knowledge?  
Understand you?

Humbly may I harvest  
your richer spectrum  
than my life  
in the office  
offers?

If I knew you,  
would I be you?  
To reach your light  
must I groan with long  
effort and escalation?  
Or simply relax with  
easy exhalation?

Unanswering,  
you fold  
the shimmering cloudy  
whites around your  
blazing yolk and  
drop away.

Breath of good night  
is felt below  
my horizon.

Suddenly I see  
you shooting aloft  
for thirty seconds  
a brilliant vertical  
shaft of orange  
as if to acknowledge  
we know we know  
each other.

My train trundles on.

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Commuting past the 'Hood

**The 'hood is the 'hood is the 'hood, where a throb in the heart  
can keep time, keep time with a sturdy song too blue for the too too.**

Through the train window  
I notice inhabited shells  
south of the tracks--  
hollow-windowed,  
mottle-roofed homes.

Open-hooded engineless  
cars rust under giant  
cottonwoods littering broken  
sidewalks leading to front doors  
opening into TVs never not on.

Perhaps some brutal mothers  
feel free to batter TV-addled  
children in these houses,  
loose cages to be escaped  
for safety in the streets.

Perhaps some fathers are  
secrets or stray away  
or land jobs in fall-apart  
factories for just enough  
cash to prolong starvation.

Within this silver train  
suburbanites glide safely past  
the 'hood with eyes in newspapers  
or closed in sleeping bliss,  
unaware and uncaring that

south of these tracks might  
thrive a rugged richness  
not understood by well-fed  
hardwood-floor owners  
accustomed to gourmet coffee.

Further on, west of the city,  
suburban houses appear  
all slick and pretty  
as polished pain,  
some of them transmitting

false alarms to uncaring cops,  
some of them serving as  
highly mortgaged  
coffins for lives  
deceased at the roots.

Hand-to-mouth 'hood dwellers  
grapple and make do and laugh,  
clutch most any prize and die,  
few of them ever aspiring  
to climb a dollar ladder

or pass away like  
moneyed mortals,  
trusts all set up,  
who shatter as richly  
as a falling chandelier.

## Confined

Nothing but a precise  
second hand is moving within  
the solitary stillness of this house.  
I convalesce and convalesce while  
reading the daily wallpaper.

Knickknacks cling tightly  
to their positions, dumbly  
flaunting their faded novelty  
close to books of past power  
that slump on their shelves  
like half-fallen dominoes.

Fatigued by the familiar and  
glued down by gravity,  
I lie back, later sit up,  
then move about,  
then sit again,  
a restless captive of  
fever and furnishings.

Every other person  
in the world just now is  
elsewhere and occupied.  
Have I secretly died?  
"Snap," replies the  
house, settling.

I lie back down close to my  
accurate quartz-driven clock  
whose second hand counts out  
sixty clockwise clicks and  
on and on until  
the wallpaper blurs  
and nothing occurs.

## Contemplating Shirley

We worked well together  
selling mystical books  
to mystical people,  
honoring their Visa cards  
and their souls.

Our store was fragrant with packaged incense  
and alive with hermetic energy from crystals.  
Our books contained  
the most magnificent perceptions  
that money can open windows  
into.

We played music all day  
of flutes and harps  
to reach our customers' hearts.  
In a kind of preheaven we glided  
through our store hours  
with no eye to the time  
or the weather outside.

There was the cancer, yes.  
It sounded an undertone  
in your voice  
and added a depth to your eyes.  
The chemo stole your hair  
for a while but you kept on  
selling inspired books  
on healing and wholeness  
until your curls grew back,  
more blond and beautiful  
than ever.

Now your body has transformed  
into a clear vapor and a few ashes,  
but I still see your warm eyes  
and reserved smile  
as clearly as when body  
was your instrument of being.  
I hear your quiet voice,  
not the words but the quality,  
and I know you are fine.  
You left behind a gentler world  
to come back to.

## Continuity

Yesterday the sun went down;  
this morning it came up--

as it has,  
as it will.

A nagging question plagues philosophers:  
why does the sun rise in the East at dawn  
instead of rising in the West at eve?  
They meant to solve this problem yesterday;  
they met with failure once again today--

as they have,  
as they will.

While one wise solver contemplates,  
twelve folks toil to fill their plates.  
Some produce, some sell their wares;  
all seek exit from their cares--  
one of which is not the sun  
(save that their day's work is done).  
West or East or Dawn or Eve  
to philosophers they leave--

as they have,  
as they will.



## **Counting to One**

How many skies  
has the boomeranging  
moon flown over?  
One, which breathes.

How many lives  
have you and I lived?  
One, deepening inside  
births and deaths.

How many humans  
are in the world?  
One, with splendidly  
many bodies and souls.

How many religions  
are there?  
One, tucked into  
softest of hearts.

How many universes?  
Count to one  
until the stars  
fall out of it.

How many questions  
are there?  
One big one.

What is the question?  
That's it.

## **Crack the Sky**

I cracked the sky  
And all the stars fell  
Into a pool  
Like egg yolks.

I threw the crescent moon  
Like a boomerang  
But it returned  
To its distance.

I pried the earth loose  
From the sun  
But gravity broke my lever  
And the earth stayed.

So I just fixed  
A star omelet  
And ate the universe.  
At least something worked.

## **The Cry of Everything**

Where the crow twitters  
and the bluebird cackles,  
there is the cry of everything.

Bees moo and ducks roar;  
horses croak and rocks snore.

The cry of everything, yes all of all,  
fills creation and non-creation  
with the delectable din  
of a monstrous pin  
drop.

Screen nothing out;  
mute nothing.  
All is here but for an eternal moment,  
a timeless flicker of the sun.

And when the cry of everything dies out--  
well, won't that be grand too?

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Dad's Henry J**

Dad and we three boys  
rode to the farm and back  
in our 1950 Henry J  
created by Kaiser-Frazer  
during their waning years.

It had three speeds  
more or less forward.  
Reverse required expertise  
lest the gearshift lever  
do a free-fall all the way  
over to the left.

Dad's black Henry J  
had tail fins for sport,  
two doors, and a sloping  
but hatchless back.  
Holes gradually rusted  
through the floorboard.  
It was a piece of junk  
that somehow got loved  
and joked about  
and used every day.

Its oil pressure light  
was never not on unless  
the ignition was turned off,  
but the engine forgave us  
since we gave it oil every  
two or three days.

Back seat sitting was  
decidedly disergonomic,  
but two of us sat there.  
We might be snuggling  
against a chain saw  
or some fertilizer sacks  
or old combine parts.

We three boys devised  
subterfuges to achieve  
riding in the front seat.  
We'd hang back so as  
to be the last one in.  
But Dad was onto us--  
if we dallied, he'd tell us  
to come on and get in.

We'd spend hot hours  
cutting weeds, Dad with  
tractor (lucky cuss got  
to sit down all day) and  
we with reluctant hoes  
ritually file-sharpened

each humid morning.  
After a too-long day  
we'd "knock off"  
(Dad's phrase) and  
maneuver for our seat  
in the Henry J  
by ever so politely  
letting others go first.

Four cylinders,  
sometimes only three,  
pulled four weedkillers  
back into town  
where we lived.  
A rain might splot  
the windshield's dust  
and be smeared around  
by the one wiper  
that had a blade.

Dad would never stop  
at that last stop sign  
before our house--  
said it wasn't worth  
the extra wear and tear  
on the Henry J.

Out we would pile,  
wary of hidden saw blades,  
and the Henry J's doors  
would close with a clunk  
plus extra little sounds.

Dad bought our Henry J  
for \$200 from a local man  
aptly nicknamed Bargain Art,  
and after about fifteen years  
of his nursing the car with oil,  
makeshift parts, and patience,  
it completely quit.

Then for another ten years  
it stood in our farmyard,  
tombstone to itself,  
until Dad finally sold it  
to a collector while  
preparing himself  
to die.

# ***Daresayings***

**1999-2002  
by Alan Harris**

**These aphorisms, all original, were first  
introduced in "Thinker's Daily Ponderable"**

Rush, and the entire universe is in your way.



Religions seem to hook into different parts of the sky.



If the future is infinite, mortality may be a passing fad.



The ground keeps us bound, but the sky tells us why.



To count marbles: one, two, three, four.  
To count humans: one, one, one, one.



Competition is the ego's journey; contemplation, the soul's.



The best wars never start, and all the others last far too long.



Imposing virtue upon others is like trying to paint raindrops.



Free choice is everywhere; freedom from consequences is nowhere.



Where love is the root, gratitude is the flower.



The unforgiving are the most likely to do the unforgivable.



Heaven isn't far--in fact, it's hugging us.



Irritation is a universal poison for which forgiveness is a universal antidote.



Love isn't a question of multiple choice.



Precisely where you're not getting is where you may not be giving.



Kilter is rarely noticed until something goes out of it.



Evolution is apparently endless on both ends.



To find out is human; to find in, divine.



For every day that you hang on a cliff, you get a wider view of life.



We are often blinded by what we can see, or paralyzed by what we can do.



Said love is maybe; realized love is yes.



Beginnings whoop; endings weep.



If there were a drug to reduce ego, would it sell?



Clocks accurately tick while time slips away like a black cat in the night.



Many would like to become great, but being alive is a hindrance  
and being dead is distasteful.





The ethically blind see themselves everywhere they go.



A strong person has weak moments and is strengthened by each one.



"Smile" is an anagram of "slime"---and also a path through it.



There is nothing in this world but everything, and it can't all happen in a day.



For every question conceived in the mind, an answer resides in the heart.



Living it up usually takes far less time than living it down.



Tears talk to heaven, and heaven answers.



An opportunity without opportunists is as rare as a cowflop without flies.



Desperation gives Cupid quick wings.



This is the first minute of the rest of your hour.



Good giving brings good gifts, and well-thinking fills the air with well-being.



Killed time gets even.



So much depends on love that you'd think more people would use it.



The ability to fly high on life's trapeze doesn't  
mean one is any good on life's tightrope.



Chaos you shall always have with you, and also overcontrol--try love.



Philosophies are a paradigm a dozen, but if they don't acknowledge love,  
they fall away like leaves.



A house has square feet; a home has footsteps.



Opportunity breeds opportunism breeds misfortune breeds opportunity.



"With our amazing product you will grow healthier  
every year until you die in perfect health."



To demand good but not to give is a recipe for personal stink.



When a new door opens, its hinges may be lubricated by your tears.



Authority without love is a universal poison.



Affectation is wealth's poverty.



With leaders we build; with rulers we cope.



As you take a step, the step takes you.



If your guru charges, retreat.



With every beat the heart is jumping for joy, though the  
mind may be doubting and pouting in heedless gloom.



Plants reach out for the light, while humans reach in.



Charity and software piracy both begin at home.



There is no freedom from freedom--it endlessly compels us to do as we choose.



The heart is the best advisor, and also the nearest.



After formal education has dazzled and dismayed,  
root errors bring on root learning.



We carry the sky in our lungs and the earth in our wallets.



Stupidity and genius are equally unpredictable.



There is joy ahead but much work. There is work ahead but much joy.



What is to be will unfold and unfold,  
and flowers may bloom from the mold.



A country's Gross National Gullibility closely parallels its Gross National Greed.



Wisdom from words fades away,  
but wisdom from anguish remains and remains.



The brain is a museum of the past, the heart a garden of the future.



A friendship can go no deeper than the confiding.



Weak warriors kill bodies; strong warriors win hearts.



Adversity can engender achievement,  
whereas aimless comfort is a living cemetery.



The light never goes out, but sometimes we need to go in and fetch it.



Walking barefoot in grass makes your understanding tingle.



Isn't life intrusive?



The candle lights a way to peace; the heart lights a way to joy.



To measure quality is the ultimate fantasy of the quantitative.



In the dear school of experience, gentleness is our finest achievement.



"All of our operators are still busy helping others.  
We appreciate your patience. In fact, we take it to the bank."



Truth can be stranger than fiction,  
but poetry can be stranger than either.



It takes a long time to hurry, but now comes quick as a thought.



Our gift isn't that we have, but that we see.



Love isn't fussy, but it works best where there is  
a universe, attraction, infinity, and time.



It's folly to destroy truth, whatever its costume or yours.



The freshest ideas are also the oldest.



A thought between two bites of a sandwich can change your destiny.



If not by love, then by law.



Wisdom is knowledge dampened with tears.



Ask not whether they'll hire you; ask what good they're doing for folks.



Brilliance without altruism is a cut flower.



Opposites attract, opposites butt heads, and opposites make up.



Stronger than most armor are motives clean and seen.



Flattery and fishing give hooked gifts.



Reversals for the body are rehearsals for the spirit.



Good forever gathers what evil blindly scatters.



Your real name can't be spelled or pronounced--only lived.



The wealthy feel wise, and the wise feel wealthy.



Poets and prisms make rainless rainbows.



Who can talk the flower out of blooming?



Beauty is nearer than your eye, more distant than the faintest star.



What makes a writer write is what makes a breather breathe--  
alternatives are severely limited.





"Opposites attract" makes for stable atoms and amazing marriages.



Aging has acquired a bad reputation,  
but it's a wonderful way to stay alive.



A lighted candle has no fear of the dark.



Each person is a statue of his or her soul.



A dangerous place to stand is in the way of  
someone else's highest calling.



Knock, then realize you've always been inside.



Words can be bombs, balloons, or communion cups,  
depending on what we put in them.



Compete, and everywhere, competitors;  
cooperate, and everywhere, culture.



When you've been patient long enough,  
you get to be patient some more.



Profound blessings move slowly because so much moves.



Earth life is a subset of poetry.



Wherever you find some ground, break it.



### **Turvy**

I rise to sleep  
some bliss to take  
then fall awake  
to earn my keep.



Each life is a leaf that knows little of the whole tree.



The flowers never charge the bees  
and pea pods don't invest their peas  
but bipeds have such minds for fees  
that if they could they'd sell the breeze.



A low bureaucrat looks busy and isn't,  
while a high bureaucrat simply isn't.



**Law of Kitchens:** Two people working in a kitchen will be in each other's way about every 20 seconds.

**Corollary:** Every 10 seconds if spouses.



It is efficient to be patient about several things at once.



We are poor in what we think we own.



All roads out are blocked  
by this rockslide in your mind?  
All roads in await.



Gossip is a time-filling voodoo that uses words for pins.



The goose that lays the golden eggs gets taken out to lunch a lot.



Godspeed can leave devilish messes.



Cute twice, cliché forever.



The young collect stamps; the old collect doctors.



To impose a creed by force  
is as lame as a three-legged horse.



Not to judge is good judgment.



Honesty costs only one ego.



Nothing matters, and so does everything.



The impossible is just around the corner.



Compassion may bloom beautifully out of hatred's rot.



Among the laziest are some of the busiest.



Freedom, to the aimless, may seem a jail.



"Embracing change" is a shibboleth that management commonly uses to lubricate a shaft.



If it isn't cycles, it's waves.



Killing a killer? Do the math.



A dewdrop on one blade of grass makes oceans moot.



Never let a confident person fold your parachute.



Anybody who thinks you walk on water, later won't.



Opportunity knocks, but the inevitable just comes on in.



As a person grows older, time gradually resolves into space.



You can give more than you have, but you can't take more than there is.



The kindest way to make chicken soup is to leave out the chicken.



A yacht is a cheap substitute for walking on water.



Cooking is 90% inspiration and 10% indigestion.



I cried because I had no shoes until I saw a society lady who had no fête.



Killing is a decidedly one-sided pleasure.



During election year a national flatulence sets in.



Opinion is wisdom in diapers.



Freedom allows you to choose which cage to live in.



Laziness is the mother of flurry.



Blunders create as many opportunities as does brilliance.



When you work for yourself, both of you work.



To be President is human; to be humble, divine.



Those on the take give up what those on the give take out.



Over time, pleasure and pain go together like tick and tock.



Perhaps God didn't actually create the world but won  
it in a game of marbles, and is now turning His profit.



When stocks were low,  
I didn't buy.  
When stocks soared high,  
my gain was slow.  
With stocks now low,  
my eyes are dry.



The larger the city, the shorter the tempers.



People remember your generosity far longer than your accumulation.



If roses are art,  
then thorns are critics.  
The soft choose heart;  
the hard, analytics.



Growing old means throwing all abandon to the winds.



Evil is kinetic stupidity.



Precious stones iridesce; precious people irritate.



Both love and wile  
can makes lips smile.  
To know a liar,  
look up higher.



**American Business Ethic:**

Our number one priority is customer satisfaction--  
except where achieving this might erode profits.



You are not what you do, but what you do anyway.





The meek shall inherit the earth--as long as this is really okay  
and like everybody's done with it and everything.



You can't kid hate.



Each new day creates itself from available chaos.



Wouldn't opinions be wonderful if nobody else had any?



If you're pulled along by tomorrow, today may seem quite puny,  
but if you breathe the essence of today, tomorrow disappears.



When a man's thinking is airtight, his mouth usually leaks.



### **After Cupid**

To love just right  
without a fight  
is tricky, quite.



When you're reading a book about Zen, you're not reading a book about Zen.



You get the most free financial advice from people who are in your pocket.



Carry your enthusiasm and it carries you.



When you hurt badly enough, almost anyone can be your teacher.



Old programmers never die--they just become legacy.



Gifts given give gifts.



Competition feeds the outer person, while cooperation feeds the inner.



The wall that protects you also confines you.



The root cause of humanity's dramatic progress  
during the twentieth century may be coffee.



Your bad habits will kill you if bad luck doesn't get you first.



To find eternity, lift up the minute.



Like milestones on a journey, our mistakes show us right where we are.



We age in years, but we mature in moments.



Ultior motives may be invisible, but oh, the smell.



The small angers the small.



Even perfection has its limitations. For example, a perfect square can hardly roll.



The slogan "Time is money" has encouraged Americans to spend  
as much time chasing money as money saving time,  
creating a high standard of frazzle.



Scrooge no longer hates Christmas, now that he's acquired it.



Tomorrow holds rewards  
for thoughtfulness today

distilled from painful errors  
in endless yesterday.



The mind discovers buttons that the heart refrains from pushing.



In an important business meeting there will typically be more faces than people.



Many newcomers in hell are soon put to work designing phone menus.



### **A New Beatitude**

Blessed are the shrinks  
who'll listen to you hollah  
for just a hundred dollah  
when life completely stinks.



Progress entails thinking outside of the box to create fresh boxes  
for the unimaginative to think inside of.



Our enemies teach us lessons that our admirers never can.



In a university you can have a bad idea without endangering the general public.



America has quietly fallen into the hands of those who drive over the speed limit.



If unpaid overtime isn't slavery, it's certainly funny money.



Future historians may note that during the twentieth century,  
idolatry was almost completely replaced by idollaratry.



For the endless commitments we make, our days contain too few infinities.



A quarter for expertise buys a dollar's worth of peace.



As Santa comes down the spine from the head to the heart, everything seems a gift.



Does the Star of Bethlehem not shine from every eye?



To refuse free goods and sold enlightenment can prevent a lot of complications.



A car gets you there--beyond which, it's metal clothing.



What if they gave a peace and nobody relaxed?



Quiet is to noise as silence is to quiet.



A school without soul is a busy-box.



Negotiating with a car salesman feels like playing a game of poker blindfolded.



Two invisible antagonists animate nearly every board meeting.  
They are quality and quantity.



After all that some of us have been through, hell should be a breeze.



"Financial independence" and "knowing truth"  
have been two of the 20th century's most sacred oxymorons.



Earth is unsure footing  
and wealth is insecure,  
but how you've loved and given  
will deathlessly endure.



Those who choose bravely learn deeply.



The spiritual path is lined with many discarded carrots and sticks.



Most modern battles have been lost quietly at night in front of an open refrigerator.



How can we be sure that infinity is all there?



Some music critics will tell you when the meadowlark is out of tune.



Wherever there's new ointment, can a fly be far away?



A sure way to learn is by ignoring good advice.



Each ballot is a bullet unshot.



When the irresistible meets the immovable, a telephone rings somewhere.



But for your past calamities, your virtues might be fewer.



Where would a poet be without an angst to grind?



Can a fountain be robbed?



Saying "no" strengthens; saying "yes" creates.



Poetry works best when you ignore the words.



So many the important, so few the awake.



Dogs and politicians bark until fed or elected.



We are most strengthened, over time, by our weaknesses.



Judge not, and you're dead.





After 50, the best thing about a birthday is having it.



Anything you hide is perfectly safe until found.



The flirt and the flatterer make a cozy couple--for a while.



Well-timed silence is the purest speech.



Everyone, even vegetarians, can benefit by occasionally eating crow.



Their relationship has matured to the point where they don't need each other at all.



Music is better than no silence at all.



When it is time to cry, you do. No volcano is more irresistible than a sobbing whose time has come.



Drinking from deep springs won't make you deep, but digging may.



Unity is the safety net forever beneath twonity.



The palate can murder the colon.



Fate remains wonderfully poised when gamblers tempt it.



When an error is made, the stupid blame,  
the conventional cluck, and the awake learn.



For deepest meditation, nothing is necessary--very necessary.



Human motives are so complex that a judge can only be a poet of justice.



In a nutshell, be a nut.



Cyberia: where you live if a good e-mail friend cuts you off.



Even more loathsome than pious condemnation is pious forgiveness.



Even with its hassles, life seems to be the best thing they've come up with yet.



Art and money sleep in twin beds.



### **Treasures**

For years he schemed for money,  
the focus of each day.  
Now bankers have his money  
and he is gone away.



Most knowledge is just belief wearing a top hat.



At the end of a day, is there one less day in your life or one more day in your life?



Intolerance leads to suffering leads to investigation leads to compassion.



Brilliance uses fine words; character, pauses.



There's nothing like a prototype to give the  
impression that there's a bandwagon to jump onto,  
even when there's only a star and a hitch.



Buy now, and forever comes free.



Any three shark lawyers know at all times which three of them are lying.



Why do some people postulate a female God  
but avoid granting the same favor to the devil?



**Do:** a verb sprinkled liberally into airline announcements  
to create the illusion of intense caring.



Visualization can be important to one's advancement in a large company,  
especially the ability to see clothing on naked emperors.



As surely as a bud, given water, will become a flower,  
the office sycophant, given power, will become an autocrat.



You may wish on a star, but you get what you are.



One inevitable can overturn thousands of impossibles.



The intelligent are wary of the smart.



**Moment:** an infinitely expandable unit of time,  
used often in situations of love or airline delays.



Pain doesn't enjoy us, either, but it's got a job to do.



"You have mastered it, my disciple. Next week we  
will explore the sound of one hand NOT clapping."



If a cat could speak, it probably wouldn't.



Every person we meet is both a wonderland and a curriculum.



To know who you are, observe what you do.



Taste makes waist.



A suture in time saves the future.



A guru said to his gathered disciples: "There are two kinds of people:  
those who don't know, and those who don't know that they don't know."  
A disciple asked, "How do you know?"



**School board meeting:** a process whereby difficult problems  
are brought up, discussed with opinionated bewilderment, tabled,  
and later solved by the school secretary.



The first shall be last and the last shall be first,  
while the mass in the middle opine.



Definitions are the main tinker-toys supporting any civilization.



The town's gun factory stands not far from a church,  
both making the world a little holier.



At the end of a meadowlark song, the silence is double.



Someone's big ego and a dead rat in the wall are about equally difficult to ignore.



Business office survivors learn to distinguish bluster  
from need, and anxiety from importance.



Months come disguised as days, and swindle us sweetly of years.



We depend upon each other for our independence.



Undone tasks quickly have children and grandchildren.



There's nothing new  
beneath the sun,  
but luckily,  
what's old is fun.



Be glad if your age is still approaching your IQ and not leaving it behind.



Time is all we have, and most of what we don't have.



For a variety of reasons, every Christmas the uninformed  
buy the unnecessary for the ungrateful.



Crying makes an inner rainbow.



To find big mistakes, look for big egos.



You can't buy a home any more than you can feel at home.



Everyone contributes to society--some by serving as horrible examples.



We learn so much from some of our mistakes that we keep on repeating them.



Guilt is a little prison that keeps you out of big ones.



## **Darkness**

What could be so dark  
as lying awake at night  
dreading the next day?

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Death Is Life Bursting into Bloom**

When I die, I will not die.  
I will be a foot coming out of a too-small shoe,  
a bird flying free out of a cramping cage,  
an astronaut taking off his space suit,  
having safely returned home.

When you die, you will not die either.  
You are not your body, as I'm not mine.  
You will see a brighter rainbow  
and hear heaven's ethereal music  
which no stereo can capture.

When I die but not die,  
I will leave a little part of me  
inside your memory.  
It will be your key to my door  
that is always open in heaven.

When you die but not die,  
I will have the key to your door too.  
Better to have keys for open doors  
than closed doors without keys,  
as in this locked-up life on earth.

When I am gone but not gone,  
think of me and I am there.  
When you are gone but not gone,  
I will send you flowers through the air.  
Let us celebrate the magnificent safety of death.

## Death through a Peephole

How can I word it?

I am 45, on the  
downhill side of life.  
Lying on the couch,  
eyes closed,  
my stereo playing Bach's  
St. Matthew Passion,  
I see death  
through an inner peephole--  
a visionless glimpse.

There it is,  
a threatless,  
benevolent space,  
neither outer nor inner,  
where neither moon nor  
Andromeda move.

I feel the grip of a subsonic  
bass note in my chest,  
a whole note from  
the bottom of the cosmos.

Death? Is that you?  
A beautiful black  
emptiness full  
of friendly steadiness?

Yes, comes no answer.

I look up at the ceiling  
and smile at 46.

## Deep Coffee, Alone

Suburbs (proud arks upon a primitive sea)  
leak.

Today a female heart has gone funny--  
funny like the strangest way a heart can feel  
and still beat.

Quiet on her white couch,  
drinking gourmet coffee,  
she wrestles with inner intrusions  
not covered by her insurance--  
uninvited bass notes  
are troubling her treble reality.

All is in place outdoors--  
sunshine properly warming her acre,  
fertile lawn greenly framing  
her sporty car aglitter in the driveway,  
white patio furniture gleaming  
from acceptably jaunty angles.

But indoors, wallpaper blurs near the couch.  
She cries--longly, profoundly cries.

Her architected home has no ears  
for such snappings of heart,  
nor is her healthy lawn  
in sympathy wilting.

Her white couch, red car, green lawn,  
and petite palace of prepared comfort  
seem like checkers, smart but alien  
on a board whose game has fallen  
deep into chess for keeps.

Coffee and courage by now cool,  
she meekly questions the silence:  
"What is happening to me?"

Body, calm.  
Mind, thoughtless.  
Heart, electric.  
Silence, holy.

(Cup needs rinsing.)

## **Dilemma**

Yes, no--  
every day deeper--  
this, that--  
maybe--  
no, not.

Grinding of the gods  
peels away raw chaff  
from bleeding grain,  
daydream by nightmare,  
week by moment.

Heartbeats nor breathing  
repair this rift that  
tumult has torn  
between two rights  
that are both wrong.

Struggle nor simmer  
brings any glimmer  
of release.

The breath continues,  
but the blood  
grows thicker.

Yes, no--  
it is not given to know,  
but to go forward--  
or just go.

## **Divine Mischief**

If Oneness, why Twoness?  
Is the One a relief for the Two,  
and is the Two an excitement for the One?  
A brush against the Divine Cheek?

Perfect Oneness rains polarity  
down into physical creation and conflict--  
but later, Twoness sublimely surrenders  
back into the One Breath.

Can there be some mischief here?  
Might the Two be the One's TV?

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Divine Priorities**

Why build the Church cathedrals?  
Just pile up grains of sand  
if you've a mind to do some thing  
to occupy your hand.

Why dress up for the service?  
Why serve the holy stuff  
in gold and silver chalices?  
An old tin cup's enough.

If quality's in rareness,  
as silver's hard to find,  
how great then must be humble folks  
who've cleared doubt from their mind.

If every brick in every church  
were mortared end to end,  
that row would never leave the earth,  
but we could still pretend.

If God wants us to dress up,  
let's save fine clothes until  
the day we give this ☐ place up,  
then in them lie quite still.

But if God does want cathedrals,  
let's hurry and get more made.  
Let's build them fine, but keep in mind  
the inner ones, homemade.

## **Divinity**

This air is thin  
but You are in it,  
in my lungs  
in my blood  
in my being  
in my house.

In this picture  
on the wall  
of a red tulip  
You are cupped  
within the flower  
within the picture  
within the frame  
within my eyes  
behind my eyes.

You read through my reading,  
feel through my feeling,  
flow through my flowing,  
beat through the beating  
of my heart which You own.

In the silence  
I hear nothing  
but You  
if I but listen.  
Nothing needs to be heard,  
and the You in nothing  
especially needs to be heard.

You in me  
and I in You  
are sufficient  
for the now.



## Doing What One Can Do

Mostly the world thumps as it revolves,  
like a tire about to blow out bigtime.  
Some little place on earth has an owie  
that nobody will kiss, an owie that throbs and stinks.  
Will someone please kiss the latest wars?  
Just a couple of smackers to make them feel better?

Would you, YOU, kiss something that rancid?  
Or will you just ride along in your body,  
reading your newspaper and saying "I'll be darned"?

This world needs a gigantic, resounding kiss  
that will echo down the centuries as the turning point  
at which mankind dropped its murderous mind  
and gave and loved and gave and loved some more.

My lips are pursed to give this kiss, but where  
should it be administered?  
Where is the world, indeed?  
Where is mankind?  
These easy questions are as profound as Zen.

My heart wells up with unconditional love  
to heal and cure and save and mend,  
but there's no world to kiss, no mankind.  
Ignorant of my good intentions and holy purpose,  
the world goes on thumping like a terrible tire while  
I and a million other do-gooders fail to kiss its lump.

"Let the world be the lopsided world," my head whispers to me.  
"The world chooses perfectly what is needed for its growth,  
and so do all the people who are in the world."

But letting what is be what is is too wrenching for my heart.  
Call me whatever you wish--  
I now plant this giant smacker in the air  
so that Earth and I may groove aright among the silences.

## Dollar Dazzle

***The New York Times, Nov. 9, 1998:***

It has been almost a year since Egghead Software, a fallen leader in software retailing, announced that it would close the last 80 of its stores to begin anew as an Internet-only operation. Now the company says it is ready to start over -- again.

***The New York Times, Aug. 16, 2001:***

Egghead.com filed a Chapter 11 petition late today, according to a docket sheet in United States Bankruptcy Court in San Francisco. The company also dismissed 200 employees.

Where have all the Eggheads gone?  
Like yesterday's air--to the winds.  
I knew their store in Chicago  
on Dearborn  
near the First National Bank  
(which where has also gone?),  
knew it as well as my family room.  
The clerks there were hard to find  
and mostly smart-alecky quick  
when asked a question.  
Brightly-inked, their software boxes  
shouted "Buy me" at browsing retinas.  
The unquiet phone by the register  
preempted not-so-patient lines of  
customers holding plastic gold.  
Store policies bristled with  
selfishness behind an ostensible  
wish to please and a logoic egg.  
Where did all their profits go?

I think all the Eggheads have gone  
where all the CompUSAs are going,  
and all the Dells and the Gateways,  
each company captive in a summary  
spreadsheet managed by some  
moneyman's mind who will someday  
wave his magic tongue and say  
"No more."  
Then employees' families  
will crumble and groan,  
receiving dread notice  
oh so once again.  
Grandiose  
is Mr. American Moneyman  
in his plans, ruthless  
in his recklessness, stonehearted  
in his layoffs.

Yes, Eggheads have all gone  
where yesterday's air is now,

but on and on proceeds  
the fiscal mayhem like a rodeo,  
each new company out of the gate  
a strong bronco that few CEO's  
can ride but any can sell off  
or shoot dead.

Strip away the dollar signs  
and what remains but ego?  
Mightn't we just agree  
on having a decade or two  
of calm cooperation?  
After all, we do have us,  
right here, this moment.  
We're a complex bunch,  
but we each  
came equipped with  
yes, a heart--  
oh my but yes,  
a heart.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Door

At the far end  
of this sun-dappled,  
wisteria-draped courtyard  
I see a Romanesque  
wooden door, slightly open,  
revealing light from behind.

This courtyard is a lovely place  
but the door invites me further.  
Do I dare approach this portal  
and open it? Walk through?  
Will my future change?  
Why am I so beckoned?

I push open the door and enter.

Two attendants lead me  
directly to an oaken podium  
set before a large audience  
of robed men and women.  
I am asked to give a speech.

Quietly I say to everyone:  
"A speech I cannot give,  
kind friends. There was  
an outer door I saw ajar,  
and I came boldly through,  
but I am no one  
you would listen to."

The same attendants  
help me don a robe,  
then lead me to a chair  
among the listeners.

We all sit and wait.

## **Dove**

Dove rides windy wire,  
placid in tumult, slim tail  
flipping up and down.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Dove Missile**

This afternoon in a chapel  
in the desert mountains  
northwest of Tucson  
I was standing beside  
a large plate glass window  
admiring the landscape  
when a dove flew toward me  
at top speed not seeing  
the window as a window

The silent chapel boomed  
and the dove fell down  
still resilient enough  
to limp and flutter over  
behind some vegetation

When doves become  
missiles guided by illusion  
they seem little different  
from the murderous hawk

## **Down, Down in the Tao**

A Grand Unnameable  
inaudibly speaks  
from endless here,  
else could speak we not  
nor be.

Feathers, we,  
on a deep bird  
unseen between  
two night skies,  
flying because  
feathers can.

Listening are we, with  
our universe held to one ear,  
to keeps-playing scuffles  
between Isn't and Is, boisterous  
in their muffled playroom.

To dance is the rule  
in our This-That school  
excepting that sleep  
too is a rule  
and quite more deep.

End of the world?  
Peace after that?  
Perhaps--but from within  
the Night of All Nights  
some eventually tickled  
divine sleeper may  
dreamingly laugh aloud,  
stirring breathing into the mist--  
and back soon will be we,  
guns, and daily newspapers.

Call this if you wish  
"The Little Laugh Theory"  
although nameable is the Is  
no more than is the Isn't,  
down, down in the Tao.

## **Dream**

The universe turns  
over in its sleep and dreams  
a trillion "big bangs."

Copyright © 2021 by Alan Harris, All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **Dressed**

At birth  
my mother  
dressed me  
in the world

which I have worn  
ever since  
despite some  
fraying sleeves  
and tight belts

that I can  
deal with  
until the main  
button pops

and off of me  
the world falls  
in a useless  
heap.

## **Drifting**

Floating on this inner river

Surface always supporting

Not needing oars or rudder

Inward becoming onward

Glancing against soft bank

Returning now to center

Moving always forward

Assuming no destination

No one giving guidance

Fragrance wafting in

Effects unveiling causes

Shadows weaving slowly

Friends seen floating by

Saluting and passing on

Permanence giving way

Memories all smoothing

Keeping in and keeping on

Down merging with up

Dreaming hidden ocean

## **Dudely May**

Y'know, I'm into these lilac scents  
And the birds that chirp and sing  
Before the dawn in trees near the fence--  
It's a totally awesome thing.

My vibes become, like, optimum  
When the May air stirs my pad--  
I'm clueless where that rush comes from  
But it's totally, totally rad.

I groove with the falling of way cool rain,  
And I dig (oh, wow!) the space  
Of, like, thunderstorms (they fry my brain)  
With subwoofer-quality bass.

Since the Dude laid down this happenin' season,  
I'm thinkin' He must have meant it,  
And if May should croak for any reason,  
We'd have to, like, reinvent it.

## **Easter Wish**

happy so very  
Easter  
from under when  
beyond where  
through bluest maybe  
above cloudy ago

in loving  
quiets of  
with

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



How westbound engineers saw Earlville, Illinois in 1999

## Echoes of Earlville

When someone first revealed to me  
that I lived in Earlville, Illinois,  
I had no inkling there was ever  
any other place to live.  
Show me another town where trains  
would wail from creek to crossover,  
glissando-ing like slide trombones.

I remember winter nights in bed  
when long steam-engine whistle toots  
would bring about deep slumbering--  
reliable as lullabies.  
Soon progress dared to usher in  
the brassy, strident dissonance  
of diesel horns, "long-long-short-long,"  
which set the window panes a-buzz.

Percussion also spread through town  
from near the Farmer's Elevator--  
during harvest rush, staccato  
pops from John Deeres lined up near  
the scales sent complex polyrhythms  
further east than the Legion Hall.

Earlville was small, so most knew most--  
for everybody's good, it seemed.  
Few homes were listed, bought, or sold  
without a buzz of estimates  
proceeding through the telephones.  
Transgression stories relayed at  
the noisy downtown coffee shop  
made patrons want just one more cup--  
and filled the owner's till enough  
to pay the waitress and the cook.

In Earlville, peaceful though it was,  
occasional embarrassments  
were held quite close to home and hearth.  
Shrewd townsfolk having secrets knew  
the power that perfect silence has,  
so that even at the coffee shop  
no mortal ever was the wiser.

I wonder whether Earlville now  
is still the way it used to be.  
Are the same things happening today  
except to different residents?  
Do trains still pound those west-end switches,  
filling town with jazzy rhythms?  
Do policemen cruise the streets at night  
and watch for tavern stragglers  
who think booze helps their driving skills?

*The Leader* prints the deaths of friends  
I used to work and joke beside,  
their laughter now a memory.  
Obituaries fail to tell  
the grief and joy these townsfolk knew.  
If Roman Catholic, they find  
eternal rest on holy ground  
off Union Street just east of town.  
For Protestants and "faith unknown"  
the Precinct is the plot of choice,  
out by the blacktop south of town.  
I'll join my townsmen there someday  
when hidden forces that I trust  
decide it's time I go back home.

Although I can't be sure I'll hear  
those trains at night from where I rest,  
the living folks will surely hear  
them on and off between their dreams.  
As each nocturnal freight train bawls  
through town, then fades out west or east,  
light-sleeping heirs to Earlville's past  
will pull their covers up a bit,  
turn over, and go back to sleep.

## Echoes of Earlville

When someone first revealed to me that I lived in Earlville, Illinois, I had no inkling there was ever any other place to live. Show me another town where trains would wail from creek to crossover, glissando-ing like slide trombones.

I remember winter nights in bed when long steam-engine whistle toots would bring about deep slumbering--reliable as lullabies. Soon progress dared to usher in the brassy, strident dissonance of diesel horns, "long-long-short-long," which set the window panes a-buzz.

Percussion also spread through town from near the Farmer's Elevator--during harvest rush, staccato pops from John Deeres lined up near the scales sent complex polyrhythms further east than the Legion Hall.

Earlville was small, so most knew most--for everybody's good, it seemed. Few homes were listed, bought, or sold without a buzz of estimates proceeding through the telephones. Transgression stories relayed at the noisy downtown coffee shop made patrons want just one more cup--and filled the owner's till enough to pay the waitress and the cook.

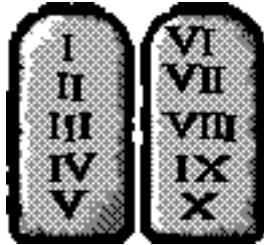
In Earlville, peaceful though it was, occasional embarrassments were held quite close to home and hearth. Shrewd townsfolk having secrets knew the power that perfect silence has, so that even at the coffee shop no mortal ever was the wiser.

I wonder whether Earlville now is still the way it used to be. Are the same things happening today except to different residents? Do trains still pound those west-end switches, filling town with jazzy rhythms? Do policemen cruise the streets at night and watch for tavern stragglers who think booze helps their driving skills?

*The Leader* prints the deaths of friends I used to work and joke beside, their laughter now a memory. Obituaries fail to tell the grief and joy these townsfolk knew. If Roman Catholic, they find eternal rest on holy ground off Union Street just east of town. For Protestants and "faith unknown" the Precinct is the plot of choice, out by the blacktop south of town. I'll join my townsmen there someday when hidden forces that I trust decide it's time I go back home.

Although I can't be sure I'll hear those trains at night from where I rest, the living folks will surely hear them on and off between their dreams. As each nocturnal freight train bawls through town, then fades out west or east, light-sleeping heirs to Earlville's past will pull their covers up a bit, turn over, and go back to sleep.

# ***Echoes of the Decalogue***



## ***Poetic Commentaries on the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17)***

**by Alan Harris  
1990**

### **Preface**

The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, were written down by Moses thousands of years ago and recorded for humanity in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, verses 1-17. I have interpreted them poetically here in an attempt not only to bring alive their literal meanings with imagery, but also to pick up some of the wisdom and beauty latent in a seemingly austere code of conduct.

The Ten Commandments are timeless guides for living in time. They help us to avoid stress-causing actions. They encourage us to transcend our selfish desires. They focus our minds on what is right and good. Intelligently followed, they engender love and growth, steering us away from blunders which might later bounce back upon us as pain or illness.

If we are observant, we notice a law of cause and effect at work in our lives. Unselfish actions and constructive speech generally return dividends of health and happiness, whereas our selfish actions and destructive words lead us inexorably toward discomfort and suffering. We reap what we sow. The Ten



Commandments help us cut down the weeds in our daily lives and sow fruitful seeds for the future.

Life on earth has been called a school for souls. Those who know and observe the rules are quickest to pass on to the next class. Human beings, however, are always free to choose their own path. There would otherwise be no need for the aid provided by the Ten Commandments. Freedom's great blessing is that we can begin improving our own destiny any time we choose. We are the slaves of our past, yes, but we are equally the masters of our future. What could be more fair?

## **First Commandment**

**I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no others gods before me.**

Cleave to none but the One.

The Many will court you,  
lure you into their shrines  
set up to Power,  
to Wealth,  
to Fame,  
to Security,  
and bid you worship there  
and lay down your life.

Beware of the Many,  
for they are always without,  
while the One is always within.  
Understand the undersound of the One  
before heeding any outer speeches.  
The One speaks with thundering silence  
in the heart of your heart.  
Authority devoid of the One  
is no authority at all.

The One in you,  
you in the One,  
is All.

## Second Commandment

**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them....**

Follow an idol  
and you will discover  
the taste of sand.

Powerful pullings there are  
from praise-beggars  
who give trinkets in return  
for adulation.  
Exciting are the fantasies  
of the mind through which masterful  
spinners of words invite  
allegiance and wealth transfer.

But the mightiest guide  
is the most invisible,  
the most inner and still,  
the most subtle and sublime.

Murmurings of holy power  
are here and now and always,  
not in the cunning phrases of phonies,  
not in the glittery glamor of idols,  
but in a quiet breeze of the brain  
that sways you gently toward your  
fellow men and women  
as brothers and sisters  
in our Cosmos.

Let all the idols chatter and clatter,  
for they know nothing of the  
One Grand Architect  
Whose love dissolves  
the graven images of pretenders  
and Whose flowing word  
silences all advertisements  
for self and greedy gain.

Look through, not to, the idol.

## **Third Commandment**

**Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.**

The Name of Names  
is What Was,  
What Is,  
and What Shall Be.  
Who but a thimblebrain  
would arrogate that Name  
to his own lust,  
his own anger,  
his own power over others,  
his own slanderous speech?

The Name of Names  
is a fountain of peace,  
a strength in the heart.  
Pervert that Name  
for self-gain or show,  
for pyrotechnic cursing  
of the twiddling tongue,  
and ultimately you will feel  
nagging loneliness  
when you cannot call on that Name  
for succor in some desert.

The Name of Names  
speaks itself in every instant,  
billions of times in every light wave--  
but usurp the Name of Names  
for flippancy or anger,  
and your light will gradually fade  
until you babble in the darkness.

## Fourth Commandment

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.**

The seventh day is holy--  
is when you wrap up the stress of six  
and throw it all into an inner abyss--  
is when you richly resonate  
with the lessons of the week--  
is when you pack your soul's lunch  
for the next week.

To ignore the seventh day  
and keep your work going  
on and on  
is an attachment to flutter  
that will tear you  
nerve from nerve  
over years.

A little nap is good  
on the seventh day,  
a hug or two,  
a game.

On the seventh day your heart  
can launch a loving arrow  
across the next six days  
to penetrate and renew  
your same heart  
older by a week and softer.

Remember the seventh day  
not as a burden but as a blooming,  
not as a prohibition but as a permission.

All seven days are holy to be sure,  
but on the seventh comes a celestial smile  
that only stillness may see and feel.

## **Fifth Commandment**

**Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.**

Father and Mother are One.  
You were always with Them,  
and They with you.

Never were you not,  
nor ever will you not be,  
so long as your Father and Mother  
are alive in the heavens.

Flowing humbly like water  
into all the cracks of Creation,  
your Heavenly Mother speaks to you  
gently through your inner ear.

Your Heavenly Father  
penetrates your soul  
with His primal power  
to further your growth,  
spark from His Flame  
that you are.

Honoring your Father and Mother  
is to speak the Holy Language  
which no book nor Bible  
can fully reveal.

The Heavenly Couple,  
the Yin and Yang,  
make up the Holy One.  
Your earthly parents  
are a living reflection  
of this Heavenly Union  
which nourishes you,  
allowing your awareness  
to mellow and deepen.

## **Sixth Commandment**

**Thou shalt not kill.**

Do not kill.  
There are a thousand  
reasons to kill,  
and only one not to.

What is that reason?  
Read it in a cow's gentle eyes.  
Hear it in a rooster's crowing at dawn.  
Feel it in the handshake  
of a so-called enemy soldier.

The killing knife  
pierces the center  
of your own heart.

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Seventh Commandment**

**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

Love's pure waters  
may not with impunity be poured  
into a muddy stream.  
The sanctity of the committed Two  
in harmonious devotion  
has the blessing of the One.

Adultery lurks in a mental alley,  
holding up colored pictures of bliss  
before your inner eye  
and inviting you to walk on in.  
You walk only into illusion,  
a present pleasure  
hiding a future pain.

Corrupt the Two,  
and smirky demons  
will buzz your thoughts  
like flies around dung.

Purity, purity, purity.



## **Eighth Commandment**

**Thou shalt not steal.**

To take what belongs to another  
is to feast on poison.

While Everything belongs to Everyone,  
not everything belongs to you.

Looking outward, you see  
flashy trinketry and tempting affluence  
flaunted by those who have and have.  
You lust to take it, to surround it, to own it,  
to finally be happy and free.

But looking inward to the Source,  
you can see that  
you have all anyone needs  
from the Fountain of the Infinite.

Burst open then with giving,  
and theft will become absurd.

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Ninth Commandment**

**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

A lie is like a fingernail  
screeching across a blackboard.  
It jangles your mind,  
perverts your heart,  
and sickens your body.

To lie is to build  
an ugly, frail structure  
which to maintain will require  
more and more deceit until,  
when you no longer remember  
the first lie that laid  
its flimsy foundation,  
the edifice must topple  
and come crashing down  
upon your head.

To lie is to slice yourself away  
from the Eternal Source.  
Each lie says,  
"I am more important  
than WHAT IS."  
But tongues that lie  
are tongues that taste  
the dirt of doom,  
for WHAT IS  
cannot be altered a whit  
by either false words  
or false silence.

Those who speak truth  
will prevail,  
while liars will lie--  
lie whimpering  
in the cosmic gutters.

## Tenth Commandment

**Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.**

Your neighbor's grass  
across the fence looks oh, so green,  
much greener than yours.  
But the illusion lies in the fence,  
not in the grass.  
You **are** your neighbor  
and your neighbor is you.  
These fences, whether of skin  
or legal documents  
or wire mesh,  
are made up entirely  
of separative thought.

How can you love your neighbor  
while coveting his possessions?  
In your envy you wish to shatter  
the whole universe into fragments  
in hopes of picking up  
a few of your neighbor's toys  
in the confusion.

Wanting hungrily through fences  
burns out your mind.  
Envy grows like a green worm  
eating away at your heart.

Arise from envy,  
tear down the silly fence  
which has no reality anyway,  
and give your neighbor  
the gift of unimpeded friendship.

Then both of you will have  
more than everything--  
you will share Unity.

## **Effort**

Try to force a flower,  
and what do you have?  
A mutilated bud.

Try to be happy,  
and very existence becomes  
trying.

Try to live long  
by running and jumping,  
eating by the book,  
sleeping wisely,

and die truly old  
in a nursing home  
beside a pot  
of plastic flowers.

## **Electric Heart**

Wherein does the heart  
get its authority  
to pick up the mind  
and take it for a rolling ride  
through a countryside  
of gallant impossibilities?

My heart has leapt me  
to a moon for no more reason  
than it had to, on the chance  
a fireman's net would be  
back on earth to catch me.

My heart, no longer  
trifling with blood,  
pumps pure electricity  
because I merely  
breathed for eight months  
the crackling of  
someone's lightning mind,  
now gone.

Nothing is left me but to thunder  
and wait for the ozone to clear.

## English Teacher Unbound

Dickinson. Frost. Eliot.  
Wonderful vetted poets--  
but sameness of names  
in every school.  
My students are alive--  
they need MEANING,  
not biography-worship.

Bless Keats and  
jolly Shakespeare  
for all they wrote--  
but now let's dare  
to anonymize these  
bards around whom  
schools have  
mummified their  
curricula by means  
of committee after  
workgroup  
kowtowing to  
conformist after  
department head  
after principal as  
the decades ditto on.

I'd rather pluck  
new writings out of  
most abundant  
everywhere,  
throw them all  
nameless into  
a vibrant pile,  
then pull them up  
one by three--  
READ them--  
BE them--  
poems and stories  
written by unknowns  
who may inspire  
and kindle fire.

I fully CARE,  
but I'm captive  
in this well-lit,  
firmly-administered,  
climate-controlled  
classtomb.

SOULS come here,  
parched souls.  
We're to feed them  
stacks of  
cardboard facts  
and poetic forms  
to memorize--  
vital to know,  
we con, because  
they'll be on  
the final exam.

Teachers, let us  
wake very much up!  
Dare we transcend  
the tried and dead?

Let's each write a sonnet  
on why we don't read  
sonnets--or an elegy  
for the deceased  
meanings of passion.

What would Shakespeare  
write about our schools?  
"Much Ado about Atrophy"?  
And Robert Frost?  
"The Railroad Not Taken"?

I am nobody  
to be writing like this,  
nor am I in your syllabus,  
but I can still breathe.

## **Enlightenment**

A vibrating soul  
Sends up a tentative tentacle  
And feels the Divine Touch.

The trinity of clay,  
Body and heart and mind,  
Joins the Trinity of Spirit,  
Will and Wisdom and Soul,  
As the one knowing the One.

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## An Evening Question

Blackbirds crackle random  
sonic pepper under fading skies  
at end of day when silence  
brings more pain to birds  
than sounds held in can bear.

Up west, three backlit  
afterclouds, blue-gray,  
suggest a breathless blessing,  
outer sky to inner eye.

Two robins try antiphony  
positioned fence to fence  
and trade their choruses  
across a subtlety of dew.

Overhead, a helicopter's growl  
subdues the singing birds  
who observe a silent minute  
waiting for the bully to be gone.

Next door, the dog  
barks out his being  
at something heard or felt  
and with each bark  
a girl shouts "Shut up!"  
until he does.

A cat comes walking by,  
surprised at me,  
too close,  
but quickly taking care  
to show no fear.

Quietly alert,  
I stare across  
this outdoor table--  
top all strewn with  
wings of maple seeds  
delayed from  
reaching earth--  
and I bow within.

My breath amazed  
at simple dusk,  
I fold in half,  
and half, and half,  
until there's hardly any I.

This enigmatic sky  
now closing day  
with fake finality  
while straddling  
yin and yang  
abstains from answering  
my wordless  
evening question.

## **Every Christmas**

Every Christmas never dawned but  
as pulses beating in a caring heart.

Every star was never less than holy  
leading the wise to kings newborn.

Every mother always gave to earth  
a child who never declined her love.

Every child was nearer than breath  
before its birth made glad all stars.

Every angel never less than gave a  
blessing to all babies new on earth.

Every true gift was never not given  
from open hands into grateful need.

Every unseen world is now unsilent  
as it rings with timely songs of joy.

## **Excuse Me, God**

Excuse me, God,  
I didn't see you there.  
To my nearsighted eyes  
you looked like air.

You cleared your throat  
with jarring thunderbolt,  
but I heard nothing deep,  
just felt a jolt.

I built my house  
with quite a clever plan,  
but didn't see the sign  
that said, "God's land."

I walked through woods  
and thought the cool smell  
was only natural,  
from trees that fell.

I thought it quaint,  
the orange western stain;  
I thought it nice that clouds  
wrung out their rain.

I saw the stars  
through shallow telescope,  
and saw eternity  
as just a hope.

I meant no harm--  
I had my glasses off;  
so next time, if I'm near,  
please cough.

## **Experts and Folk**

Oh whilliker thistledown, angel-may-care  
if the pins of all dumbledom fly through the air  
and tinkle quite prinkly with scatter and scorn--  
who am I, I ask you, and how was I born?

Universe, schmuniverse, big bang or no,  
let comets be vomits lit up as they go;  
let galaxies stretch till they reach golly gee,  
but where was I, why am I, who will I be?

Theological thinkers and scholarly fakes  
pretend with Godthority, footnotes, and spakes,  
assuring, demurring to cover their gap,  
but all they produce is implausible crap.

Oh wiffle-ball shuffle-through, devil-be-joke,  
instead of the experts, I'll hang with the folk  
who don't know from nothin' how we became we  
but never were not and will never not be.

## **Falls Visitor**

A hundred feet from  
Niagara's Horseshoe Falls  
hurtling blindly down  
with groaning gravitation

stood the antebuilding all  
a-color inside, and a-glitz  
with trinkets and toys  
crafted in worldwide shacks.

Chattering T-shirted tourists,  
sporting transparent rainsuits  
and chewing chewing gum,  
made ready for their big wows.

Cheep! from suddenly ceilingward  
descended the speech of a sparrow  
trapped in this house of gee whiz--  
divinity by surprise.

## Farmer Karma

I was a boy farmer  
because I had to be  
because my father  
was a man farmer  
and all my granddads  
back to almost Adam  
had been boy farmers  
and man farmers  
and that was that.  
I hardly even realized  
that I hated farming  
but just did it because  
and forever because.

I learned how to  
sharpen a hoe  
and cut through my  
hot-day reluctance  
in order to kill Canadian  
thistles in mechanical  
planticide. Dad told  
me that the county  
thistle warden might  
assess us a fine if we  
had too many thistles.  
Chop, chop, chop,  
I spiraled into each patch  
and then on to the next,  
never finishing them all.

I learned how to start  
the John Deere Model A  
tractor by yanking  
the top of its flywheel  
mightily to the left  
with the petcocks open  
to reduce compression  
until things got to popping  
then closing the petcocks  
for more power.  
That Model A and I were  
partners who bounced  
across years of bumpy soil  
pulling a drag or a disk  
or a 3-bottom plow.  
High in the bucket seat,  
teeth into the gritty air,  
I was as much a slave  
to the A as it to me,

as much a slave  
to the farm  
as any farmer is.

I shoveled grain  
inside bins where  
dust polluted the air  
and filled my lungs  
so full that  
a time or two  
I almost died  
from asthma.  
But dying would be  
a slacker's excuse,  
and the grain had  
to be leveled.

In the haymow  
there was also,  
guess what,  
dust and heat  
enough to turn  
my lungs into  
solid protoplasm--  
what bronchial tubes?  
When older, I got to stay  
outside and throw  
the bales onto  
the Mayrath hay  
elevator and breathe  
the same good air that  
our cows all breathed.

I was always dutiful.  
I never gave Dad  
a single hint that  
I didn't like farming.  
No hint, that is,  
other than my stoic  
attitude, my yes-boss  
obedience, my lack  
of any initiative,  
and my slipshod work.  
These failings didn't matter  
because there was the farm  
and there were we  
and the earth was turning  
and the weather was erratic  
and new work grew up  
as fast as the precious corn.

Dad never tried to teach  
me anything technical  
about how to farm.  
He could see my soul.  
One look at me  
on any day of any week  
told him that this boy  
would never be a farmer.  
No point in telling the boy  
how best to rotate crops  
or how to repair a combine  
or how to choose fertilizer  
or when to sell the grain.  
Such breath would  
have been as wasted  
as a cold March wind  
across the railroad field.

Dad was a good farmer  
and a good man.  
Farming is good, too.  
We get to eat from it.  
But farming gets glorified  
pretty often, and I never  
partook of that schmaltz.

I was a tractor driver  
who would watch train  
after train go by  
on the Burlington  
and wave at the engineers  
and caboosemen,  
all of us dutifully chained  
to our turning wheels.

I was a manure pitcher  
and a manure spreader  
who knew the cows had  
to produce this but didn't  
see my future in it.

Farmer karma was  
my inherited destiny  
until college days  
when I learned how  
to be amply engrossed  
in motions of the mind  
and never later hankered  
for any life on any farm.



## **Father, How Can I Hear You?**

### **A Song of Renewal**

Father, Father, how can I hear You?  
Why are the clouds so gray?  
Why is the wind so cold?  
Oh, why are the trees so bare?  
Father, Father, how can I hear You?

Father, Father, I pray unto You.  
I pray for Your light, but the clouds remain;  
I pray for Your warmth, but the cold wind blows on;  
I pray for new growth, but the trees are still bare;  
Father, Father, I pray unto You.

Father, Father, now I hear Your voice.  
Your sun melts away my clouds, and I see Your light;  
Your warm breath replaces the freezing wind;  
The trees are beginning to bud and flower;  
The landscape grows green with Your love.  
Father, Father, now I can hear You.

## Feathered Ephemera

After I had set up the bird feeder  
and filled it with seeds,  
the past entered into my lungs  
like an old friend in a gray overcoat  
coming into the house out of November.

For a few moments  
I (not seemed) was an earlier adult,  
vibrant with hints and smells,  
living younger in this aging body  
as forgotten feelings blazed up  
in the tangy wind.

Today, sparrows are flitting about the feeder  
enjoying seedy morsels that heat them  
against crackling winter mornings.

Cheerio, sparrows!  
Each wiggly one of you  
betokens a forgotten coloration  
in the cup of my soul.  
Cheerio! Eat your fill  
before the neighbor's cat  
eats his.

## **February Dreams**

February seeds silently recall all,  
As if winter's death were a silky dream,  
And the influx of the new sun's warmth  
Were the spark and flash of remembrance.

March will bring the quickening sprouts,  
April the lush early growth,  
May the flowering of procreation--  
And then February dreams will fade away.

How many memories must there be  
When seeds reclaim their hold on warming soil?  
How many seeds are there? How many lives?  
In the stillness of my heart I hear: "One."

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Find**

Reading an ancient  
manuscript I come across  
an ancient eyelash.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Finis**

Cloud-layered sunset  
intimate yellow-orange  
a finch flies over

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Fireplace**

By the fireplace tonight  
we are helping the fire warm us.  
These flames are as old as pain  
and as new as tomorrow's journey.

While the logs listen,  
we think of stories to tell  
that crackle and sizzle  
and laugh into the air.  
We confess old secrets  
and fresh hopes, surprised  
at the fire's way with truth.

What warm gift is here?  
If fire were aspiration,  
would its color differ?  
If fire were catharsis,  
would it not still crackle?  
If fire were love,  
would its flames fail to dance?

By the fireplace tonight  
we and the flames are one.

## **Five Definings**

### **Sky:**

awfullywhere above,  
is ours to  
(of course)  
share with  
(whoever may be)  
God.

### **Earth:**

much underrated,  
sturdily  
(all the same)  
holds up  
(whatever may be)  
the sky.

### **Heaven:**

sky and earth  
in a goodly  
(feel the flow)  
mix holding  
(want them in vain)  
all unholdables.

### **Hell:**

doorway to  
the back  
(way back)  
stairs leading to  
(wherever may be)  
heaven.

### **Friendship:**

life sharing  
light hearts  
(and heavy)  
without benefit  
(or hindrance)  
of shouldness.

## **A Flower for Manly P. Hall**

Unschool'd in universities  
yet flowing forth with ancient lore,  
he offers glimpses of the One  
to help all seekers see within.

He weaves his ample writings  
with silver threads and gold  
combined with rainbow shades  
of steady faith and truth.

His lectures brim with eloquence  
without the notes most speakers need.  
His seasoned wisdom can be grasped  
by any who have ears to hear.

On finding such a mind  
as broad and pure as sky  
a grateful soul is moved  
to offer up this flower.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## Flower in Vase

This budding daffodil contains  
A universe in birth:  
Each molecule a galaxy,  
Each quark a tiny earth.

And what we call our universe,  
All matter, time, and space,  
May be a single atom of  
A macrocosmic vase.

Thus up and down the scale of size  
Throughout Infinity,  
Both "small" and "large" are limitless  
And join Eternity.

Great men have puzzled over God  
To place Him in their plan,  
As Primal Cause, or Sourceless Source,  
Or vast Omniscient Man.

But God can never be confined  
Within a man-made phrase;  
He hides behind unnumbered veils  
Impossible to raise.

And yet we see His evidence  
In every time and place--  
Behind each seed and universe,  
Within each flower and vase.

Inside our inmost soul of souls,  
If we can meditate,  
We find a spark of light divine  
And feel it radiate.

While nowhere, and yet everywhere,  
Our God resides within;  
Though still and small, His guiding voice  
Transcends life's noisy din.

To hear His voice and understand,  
Then fearlessly obey,  
Is that which mystics, martyrs, saints,  
And wise men call "The Way."

Consider every universe  
And every point in space  
As God in God in God in God,  
As vase in flower in vase.

## Free

Blurry smog feeds the morning sky gassy gulps as  
Germ motorcars scuttle in lines along their causal highways.

Here we are folks in our trafficopter helicopter reporting the-  
latest developments in the traffic condition All streets-  
are running smoothly as of right now and it looks as though-  
this condition will continue for the remainder of--

The helicopter suddenly  
Descends into the mass  
Of smog and tin and milling men  
And violently cracks open like a transparent egg,  
Giving birth to an afterlife or two.

Free.  
Free are helicopters.  
Free to fly about in untold yards of morning sky.  
Free to watch the roads of other men, advise them where to turn.  
Free, some, to fall a fast free path to the hardness of the ground.

## Free Now

I get up in the morning, and my life is totally, radically free. What do I do? Do I make the bed? Do I take a shower? Do I eat a meal called breakfast? Do I go to work at an office? Do I sell my house and move to another state? Do I give my money to charity and beg? How do I think if I am free? Do I think of myself at all? Do I think of others? Am I just a clear lens which sees, behind which there is no thing, and in front of which is every thing? I am free, but how do I act? What do I do? I am free from how, and from doing, but my heart still beats, I breathe, I must eat, I must eliminate and perspire. Do I feel overwhelmed with freedom and long for the old cages? Do I become depressed because I can find nothing to do? If I see the futility in every human motion and emotion, how can I live? Where is my base of operations? In space? In nothingness? In something called God? In whatever love is? Am I really totally, radically free, or have I just enlarged my cage? Can I find the boundaries of my prison if they are invisible to me? I feel them holding me in. Am I free? Yes, I am free. No more family is necessary. No more society. No more civilization. I can walk out the door and never come back. I can go anywhere on earth. I am completely free. But to go anywhere is to not go everywhere else. I leave a trail. I remember. People remember me. There are ties. Within memory can I be free? Can I remember without encumbrance, without attachment, without hope, without fear? Yes. I am free. I sit on a rock. Where am I? Who am I? Why am I here? Am I free? Yes, totally, radically free. Do I like it? That is not the question. Freedom is all there is, and I am it. Each thin

g matters as much as each other thing, and yet no thing matters. Matterin  
g is a trap, but things are just th  
ings. I am free to lie in the mud o  
r to go to the office or to sit here on th  
e rock. What am I to do? Free, as I am,  
what is there in life? The cage has  
been sprung open and destroyed,  
and there is no going back to it. I b  
reathe, and I walk, and I stumble, a  
nd eat, and see. A man walk  
s by and sees me sitting on t  
he rock, and he says, "Hello. Nice mornin  
g, isn't it?" I say, "Yes, it is." Am I  
still free? What is another person, r  
eally? Before, I could only assume, bu  
t now I must investigate.  
What, really, is another person?  
I breathe deeply, and I get up and  
walk toward nothing, away from nothi  
ng, just walk. Now I know what I mus  
t do, now that I am radically free. I m  
ust find out what the other person is.  
He is there. I see him. He is not an illu  
sion. Is he free? If not,  
can I free him? Am I free no  
t to free him? What is relationship when th  
ere is freedom? I will investigate until I die.  
A bird lands on a fence post.

## Free of Verse

jet lag of the soul  
as free as habitual wishes  
cosmic popcorn for the mind  
brushes my cheek  
executives at pomp in the pompground  
whisper while you whisk  
bless this up until now pagan food that we may remain asleep in holiness  
billions of internal collisions today, and the city burps in the dark  
help reduce the national debt--buy US Savings Bonds  
politician without a tongue, please--rare  
wolf and fox a-smile  
sweet encrypted mummies  
smelling a buxom face

## **Freedom Grounded**

Hypnotized by young freedom,  
I chased bedazzling baits of my choice  
until pain came crashing through my doors.

Thank you very much, freedom.

And I ate choice foods with delight  
until my older arteries became clogged  
with a near calamity of consequences.

Freedom, do you need to be fatal?

Computer-enabled, I freely flew commodity  
futures like a test pilot, with precision eyes  
trained on my instruments--then crashed.

Hello, is anyone there?  
Freedom, you truly stink.  
Can I at least be free not to be free?

"Serve," says no voice.

Serve? Why serve?

"It works."

Serve without pay?

"With or without pay--but with energy."

No more freedom, then?

"Remembering your former agony  
while serving where the need is,  
you gain a grounded freedom."

From whom do I hear this?

"From the call without a voice."

## Frequently Asked Questions about Christmas

**Q:** If Santa doesn't have to age, then why has he become old?

**A:** He only appears to be old. He's an undercover kid.

**Q:** How can a sleigh possibly fly through the air?

**A:** If you were being pulled by eight flying reindeer, wouldn't you fly too?

**Q:** Why do we wish people a "Merry Christmas" instead of a "Happy Christmas"?

**A:** The two are about the same, but with "Merry Christmas" an extra twinkle is seen in the eyes.

**Q:** Why is a Christmas tree that has been chopped down called a "live Christmas tree"?

**A:** It's dead but doesn't know it, and yet it's having the time of its life.

**Q:** Why do we wrap our Christmas gifts with paper?

**A:** Because we like to see surprise and joy (real or kindly faked) in the recipients.

**Q:** How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?

**A:** Nowadays only four angels can dance there. Formerly there was no limit, but OSHA passed the Angel Safety Law recently, which also requires that the pin must be inspected twice each year for structural defects.

**Q:** How many gifts can Santa Claus's bag hold?

**A:** One less than infinity. Why one less? Because there's a limit to everything.

**Q:** How could a star that is high in the sky lead the Wise Men to a tiny manger on the ground?

**A:** Wisely, toward the end of their journey they asked directions from someone on the road. Had they not been so wise, they might have missed the manger by several hundred miles. (That person on the road has never been identified.)

**Q:** Is there really a Mrs. Santa Claus?

**A:** The best way to know for sure is to ask Santa Claus next time you see him.

**Q:** Why do we hear so many bells at Christmas time?

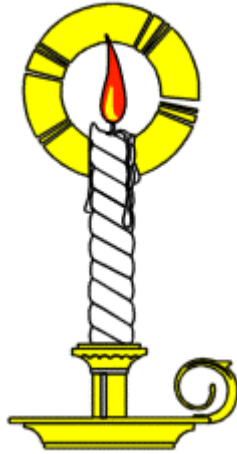
**A:** Because so many people ring them.

**Q:** Why do so many people ring bells at Christmas time?

**A:** For the poor, for the joy, and because a bell can say what words can't say.

**Q:** What can't words say?

**A:** The moment you wake up on Christmas morning, listen carefully. You may hear then what words can't say.



## **Friendlight**

### **A Good-Bye Poem**

When certain folks  
become good friends  
a candle lights  
and remains aglow

and when these folks  
round separate bends  
this light stays lit  
and will always show.



## **From Beyond**

**Dedicated to the Memory  
of Gerald R. Detmers  
(1934-1998)**

Floral gatherings  
are here tagged  
with your sympathetic  
signatures,  
reprimanding  
my hastification  
toward the flimsy  
hand of freedom  
that lifts me  
into the underheights.

You may freely glorify  
or scorn my memory  
now that I have reached  
below the neath  
and behind the horizon  
of hurry.  
Burn and urn me  
if you will,  
but I am far too far  
beyond the mold  
for any engraved  
fanciness to hold.

But let the children  
chant their games,  
the clouds glide  
freely by,  
the giant world  
pulse free breaths,  
for I blend only  
back into a whole being  
from my little island  
of dinky doom.

Be, merely be here with me  
as my brief obituation  
slides through the air  
like a telegram of smiles.

## **Frozen Fantasy**

My first breath outside  
on a winter morning  
speaks a frosty sentence  
and drifts off.

When my hand sticks  
to a cold pipe,  
I have joined the winter club.

When the sneaky wind  
finds a crack in my coat,  
I feel the grip  
of zero.

Winter is,  
if anything,  
a surprise in ice.

## **Gathering**

A hush around the dying  
lacks nothing for no words--

forgiveness by default,  
love river-big,  
faltering philosophies,  
robbed expectations.

The air inside the air  
seems ready to receive.

Copyright © 1999 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

# Getting Old

## A Burlesque

It's awful to get old, it is.  
Today I got pretty winded  
rocking away in my chair  
so I went upstairs for a nap  
but tripped over my beard  
which is the same color  
as the fog before my eyes.

Then I couldn't remember  
whether I'd been upstairs  
or downstairs, and worse yet,  
it didn't seem to matter.

I no longer care whether  
there's life after death,  
now that life before death  
has become so confusing.

Where did I put that drool rag?  
I must switch to a new one,  
since we're in a new month.

I've missed church services  
for several weeks in a row  
because they hold them right  
in the middle of my night  
at 10 a.m. Whenever I do go,  
I'm so groggy I can't tell  
the Lord's Prayer from  
the Lord's Supper, and I'm  
apt to get to thinking so deep  
that my wife says I breathe  
too loud and she nudges me  
to break my train of thought.

So this is what it comes to.  
When you're a child you  
think you'll never get old,  
and when you're old, you  
forget you were ever a child.

I catch myself rambling  
a lot and hope that people  
won't notice because maybe  
they are nearly as old as I am  
or they might be sympathetic  
or at least look the other way.

I guess this drool rag's still okay.

## **Gifts That Stay**

*A Wedding Poem*

How fortune made us meet  
we cannot say,  
but soon two pairs of feet  
will walk the way.

We mirror each to each  
the lessons needed  
to learn what love may teach  
if only heeded.

We give as best we can,  
this wedding day,  
a woman and a man  
as gifts that stay.

Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **God's Spirit Dwells**

God's spirit dwells  
in private hells  
where broken dreams  
cause curdling screams.

Our souls God lifts,  
and of His gifts  
the most obscure  
cause cleanest cure.

We rant, we rave  
for God to save,  
but God saves all  
who prostrate fall.

Away by Christ  
our sins were sliced;  
now His great reign  
rids Death's domain.

Dear God, we pray  
that all we say  
and all we pen  
be Thine. Amen.

## **Good Friday**

If ever rain should sing a hymn  
throughout and throughin;  
if ever unfolding buds with tiny pain  
should bloom big over meadows;  
if ever hearts in deepest pain  
should find a silver light--  
let it be on Good Friday,  
our day of holy surrender to  
more than we know,  
our bow of reverence to  
more than we are,  
our wail of grief for  
all that might have been,  
our needed emptying  
of the cup of self to  
find an inner morning--  
an Easter wherein  
the Sun of Love  
will rise again.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Graduation**

Our ride  
slows  
to a halt

and the man says  
"Everybody off."

We don't  
quite know  
where  
we've been

and we're a  
little dizzy  
as we step

down into  
the future.



## **Grandstand Fantasy**

### **A Study in Emptiness**

Grandstand at sundown  
embraces an emptiness  
replete with potential  
watchers and watched.

Screams and cheers, none,  
nor any spilled soda pop,  
nor adolescent boys testing  
their fear of strangers--

Greased pigs won't play  
before an empty house,  
nor will jockeys race fast  
horses for just nobody.

Shiny seats wait, all pretty  
in rows, for homo sapiens  
to bounce upon their boards  
from planned excitement.

Soldier-like in rank and file,  
bright red backrests stand  
at rigid attention where no  
eyes are and no announcer is.

Low sunlight plays to the  
stands (since no performers  
are), revealing geometry  
never proven by Euclid.

Emptiness is given shelter  
under one generous roof,  
pillars reaching up and out  
in a far-flung Calvary.

No one departs and throws  
away no trash, asking  
"Where does an empty  
grandstand go at night?"

## **Grief Is a Thief**

Grief is a thief  
you have urged  
to take you away  
but with your own  
key locks you,  
wet with tears,  
inside your musty  
woolen closet and  
turns out the light.

Dark in your trap  
shared with moths  
you cry long past dry  
and choke on all why.

When you know it's  
time (and you will):

burst  
the closet open  
into a room,  
burst  
the room open  
into a sky,  
settle for no moons,  
pray past all suns,  
inhale from Cosmos.

Not earth are you  
but the damp wick  
of a future shining.

Strike your match  
and light the way.

## **Griefs That Stay**

Some griefs  
(and you know  
yours by name)

twist so terribly  
deep that instead  
of crying

you carry them like  
inoperable bullets  
inside your flesh

and feel their  
twinges every few  
seconds without

letting on  
to even  
your dearest--

damnable, beautiful  
griefs that fit you  
like a bone.

## Haiku

Empty church: alone  
I sit in sermonless awe  
as steeple doves coo.

Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Haiku Basket

As flies skim the pond  
my eyes can't seem to follow  
the words in this book.



Early smoke rises  
out of old chimneys at dawn,  
dark on dark in rows.



A blue silk pillow  
makes sitting upon hard earth  
something like pleasure.



Drawn by one blossom,  
this bee hovers and circles  
in fragrant delay.



## 6 Christmas Haiku

Ice on pine needles--  
can it hear the Christmas bells?  
Can anything not?



Spider in the drain--  
Christmas whoops in the parlor--  
silent, dark, the drain.



Scrub Christmas tree, bare--  
rooms echo--furniture gone--  
mother and child laugh.



Sleigh ride all finished--  
the mare, eating Christmas oats,  
hears house noise, and snorts.



Flashing Christmas lights  
entrance three speechless patients  
slouched in parked wheelchairs.



Tree's all taken down--  
year's end--where is Christmas now?  
Deep within each pulse.



Mountain cabin porch--  
tall pines crowding for sunlight--  
sweep, sweep, brown needles.



Fisherman casting  
for luck to kill a dumb fish--  
the river flows on.



Icicle drippings,  
slower under western blush,  
hint frozen silence.



A woodpecker clings  
upside-down under his limb,  
tuning the forest.



Cat crossing my yard--  
shadow of the Infinite  
stalking the Unknown.



Broken branch still clings  
to all the tree it has known,  
breeze-swayed above ground.



My sturdy white pine  
preaches calm to the maples  
stripped bare in the yard.



Thunderbolts today  
are silent by the thousands--  
but this blue won't hold.



Remembered writers  
film murderously fast trains  
from close to the tracks.



The most delicious  
strawberries are the first ones  
needing replacement.



First sun of spring floats  
due east, orange, fat--for what?  
Raindrops and babies.

Copyright © 1998 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## Haiku Poems

Western glow fading--  
decrecendo of songbirds--  
stars surprise the eye.



Peach blossoms unfold  
new petals without hurry,  
knowing the sun waits.



My body is still;  
pilots must fly in airplanes  
and birds must use wings.



Feathers up for sleep,  
sparrows on wires chirp farewell  
to the dimming day.



Near tilted tombstones  
arthritic black oak branches  
finger the cold sky.



Seen through train windows,  
trees, like commuters, rush toward  
where they've always been.



Up through city trees  
a steeple stabs the blue sky  
with its metal cross.



Windswept blades of grass  
lightly brush the abbey wall;  
monks seek light within.



Opening lotus,  
pure white in morning sunlight--  
suddenly, a fly.



Gray old man shimmers  
far ahead on the blacktop  
with his red gas can.



Uplifted tree roots  
protect a torn nest of wrens  
barren of feathers.



A soggy songbook  
floats among twelve frogs singing  
greenly in the pond.



A brief breeze pivots  
over ballerina toe  
then swishes away.



Leaden clouds rumble,  
falling down loud steps of storm;  
pounds of sky come down.



Speckled night whirls on,  
a slow, hypnotizing wheel  
around Polaris.



Green groan of ocean  
releasing flimsy gray clouds  
to the moving moon.



Weak of bone, old men  
listen to the wail of trains  
far in the distance.



Each star's faint twinkle  
is a holy statement sent  
for all eyes to hear.



Brutal ocean's roar  
tames to glimmering dewdrops  
on frail gossamers.



Raging tiger eyes  
shine out from jungle shadows,  
rubies on velvet.



Pulses of green life  
gently release tulip blooms  
from tight, aching buds.



Above moving night  
from her crescent-shaped ladle  
the moon pours silver.



The wren's prism throat  
casts up a rainbow of sound  
over summer grass.



Warm southerly breeze,  
scented by May-bloomed lilacs,  
breathes early heaven.



Roaring punch-presses  
stamp out bright dangling earrings  
for delicate ears.



In my dream I hear  
spiders strumming their cobwebs  
under humming trees.



Sudden silence is  
pregnant with eons of sounds  
waiting to be heard.



The listening sun  
paints a coat of life on earth  
by way of reply.



Love's pure silver flame  
gives each innermost spirit  
invisible warmth.



Silent cathedral,  
every stone a work of love,  
embraces the Christ.



This cricket-filled night  
gives forth undulating sounds--  
dark respiration.



Heavy bumblebee,  
magnetized upward by air,  
masters gravity.



In twilight far off  
a mother calls for her child--  
two eternal notes.



Crescendos of light  
build an eastern harmony  
from solar rhythm.

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## A Haiku Quilt for Y2K

My house is burning--  
a neighbor has brought coffee  
which tastes excellent.

Hill of snowy pines--  
has anyone let you know  
about Y2K?

A falling red leaf  
lightly taps my left shoulder.  
Yes, I say--I've heard.

Orange maple leaves,  
why can't I prolong your lives?  
"We're the clock for yours."

Sitting by flowers--  
silence--until a petal  
falls upon a stone.

Spring rain is falling  
on a fountain shooting high--  
not a drop confused.

Water drop forming  
on this tree leaf tip--how does  
it know when to fall?

Open, empty truck  
parked beneath a star-filled sky--  
what is there to haul?

The sun rises red  
and fifty more pedants are  
experts on haiku.

Desert sun cooling  
hotly down the western sky--  
lizards blink, stir, wait.

Lazy snow circles,  
crystals landing like light planes  
on brown grass runways.

Tulip buds in rows  
bloom by bloom become cannons  
shooting at the sun.

War in your closet  
hangs somewhere behind your clothes  
needing awful love.

New snow -- old snowman  
leaning in the yard next door,  
one coal for a wink.

## **Haiku Recursion**

5-7-5 form  
can say anything at all  
with title or not.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **Harmlessness**

I saw a spider  
on my wall and left it there—  
gone now, but still is.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Healing Meditation #1

Always, alwhy, alwhere  
we breathe our breaths  
within the great Breath.  
Gentle now, the breath,  
and open, the mind.

If bothered by a grudge,  
forgetting.  
If squeezed by a fear,  
faith in faith in faith.  
If too many self-mirrors,  
outgoing to the hurting.  
If mental moneyclaws,  
giving both little and big.  
If outstriking rage,  
surges of forgiveness.

In our jungle of errors,  
out of dark unknowing  
each new leaf sprouts  
as a separate pain, regret,  
disease, or loss of body--  
but each, when assimilated,  
becomes a sacred leaf  
in our Book of Knowledge.

For strength, going soft.  
In softness, seeing light.  
In light, discerning duty.  
In duty, finding joy.

## **Healing Meditation #2**

Where I hurt, I grow.  
Where I hurt, I learn.  
Where I hurt, I atone.  
Where I hurt, I am alive.

If I could know why I hurt,  
and go back enough in time,  
I would uncause it, and yet  
I know that now is too late.

But now is back in time for later,  
so I need to learn all I can  
of the living ethics and physics  
to avoid future pain.

I search for the Book of Ethics  
and find it in other people's eyes.  
I struggle with force and matter  
and find it all gentling with love.

Where I learned, let me teach.  
Where I suffered, let me heal.  
Where I took, let me give.  
Where I stumbled, let me warn.

### **Healing Meditation #3**

Gentle go the waves  
that heal me in the night.  
Soft are the sounds  
that give my body light.

Now my room is dark  
and sleep is nowhere near,  
but hints of future joy  
are warding off all fear.

Soon will come a time  
when pain has gone away,  
when Yes, a healthy Yes,  
will have its mellow way.

With medicine to comfort  
and universe to cure  
I see no need to worry  
as impure turns to pure.

## **Hearing**

Tinnitus, like God,  
is always in there to hear  
during quiet times.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Her Grace Returns**

When one's Muse returns  
from a multi-year absence  
in undisclosed locales,  
the avenues in the mind  
host a parade of images.

The inner church bells ring,  
confetti flutters down  
from open windows,  
mothers hug the children,  
fathers hug the mothers,  
and it is just a dandy time.

Her Grace rides elegantly  
in the back of a convertible,  
waving, throwing candy  
to eager running children  
and kisses to everyone else  
on both sides of the mind.

After the parade is over  
she enters one's abode  
and seats her welcome self  
within the heart of the soul.

## **Here and the Ground**

The shiny car you drive is  
going into the ground.  
All the neighborhood trees are  
going into the ground.

Buildings, all of them, are  
going into the ground.  
Your sofa and your dog are  
going into the ground.

But soul--have you a soul  
that won't go into the ground?  
What force can keep your essence  
from going into the ground?

Suppose your body quits and  
does go into the ground--  
where will your soul then be?  
My own says, "Here, right here.

"The love that makes life life is  
dwelling in your here,  
and all you ever gave is  
coming back to your here.

"Thing and thing and thing may be  
going into the ground,  
but where can your here ever go  
except--exactly here?"

## Here at the Close of Christmas Day

Tonight the season  
breathes easier again--  
the ribbons are cut,  
the paper's been ripped.

We silenced last night  
with candles and song,  
and today we enjoyed  
the meal of the year,

allowing for Uncle Carl's jokes,  
Cousin Peter's pomposity,  
and righteous kitchen clatter  
before the family feast began.

The season's reason?  
I don't ask why,  
nor does why  
ask me--

I just roll with days  
of way too much  
and nights of less  
than nothingness

like a child held safe  
in the all-year arms  
of Mother Everything,  
whose love is all there is.

I used to fear, then fall  
from these arms of love,  
but where was there to fall  
except Here?

If Here can be taken away,  
we are doomed--but so far,  
Here seems all there's ever been  
and perhaps will ever be.

This living room now smells  
of candle smoke and new perfumes  
as Christmas magic leaks away  
into midnight, we still we.



## **A Hidden Sky**

There is a sky  
below the ground.

I saw it today  
through puddle windows  
along my street.

Big sycamore leaves  
were floating in it  
like balloons becalmed.

Trees were towering  
downly up  
beneath my feet.

If streets contain a sky,  
do you and I?

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Homeglow after Visitors

Two couches  
smile in dim light  
over the active  
weights they  
recently bore.

Spots on the wallpaper  
remember certain  
apt verbs.

Ceiling regions  
glow with laughings  
over sudden quips.

Hopes,  
confessions,  
worries  
have now slipped out  
through the windows  
to germinate or vanish  
in the sod outdoors.

Are the smiles,  
the glows,  
the illuminations  
that haunt our home  
still stirring within  
our sometime  
visitors?

A spring inside  
the older couch  
chuckles.

## **Honored Guest**

Came on a thread,  
you did,  
to shine,  
you do,  
a warm beam,  
you are,  
from a sun  
we all share.

Bless the thread  
that brought us you,  
and you that brought  
the beam to share.

Natural,  
you seem,  
and fresh,  
completely,  
as rainwater  
seeking grass,  
or daffodil buds  
blooming for April.

Like a stirring of air  
through an open  
window, you freshen  
the whole house.

## Hope and Love

As the earth spins into day and night,  
so the human soul basks in light  
and quivers in darkness.  
And as the earth sometimes has foul weather,  
the soul too has it hurricanes and rains.

Hope and love are, were, will be.  
Hope is God's eternal nudge in our ribs.  
Something is ahead  
and, knowing not its shape,  
we push toward it nonetheless.  
Hope pulls us.

Love is everywhere, and always has been.  
Love existed before we came to join it.  
Love made us.  
Love makes us make more of us.  
Love is God's radiant comfort in our souls.  
Love binds us.

With hope to pull and love to bind,  
we need not fear.

When all is seemingly lost,  
when it is nighttime in the soul,  
when there is wind and rain,  
there are yet two forces to sustain us.

Hope.  
Love.

## Hot Date or Soul Mate?

Your gaze  
Betrays  
Your dip  
Of lip.

I know  
The flow  
Of thought  
You've bought.

Your eye  
Won't lie.  
Confined  
Behind

Your mask,  
You ask,  
"Won't you  
Be true?"

Nor I  
Will lie--  
I'm true  
With you.

## **How I Clean**

As a vaccer  
I'm a slacker;  
as a hacker  
I'm a stacker.

I have trouble  
sorting rubble  
till it's double  
triple double.

I go all out  
till I stall out,  
then I haul out  
all the fallout.

## How We Came to Know Truth

Our village mystic (who,  
by  
the way, is President  
of the National  
Mystical Association)  
decided he had studied  
enough.  
He would, by  
God, climb  
the sacred mountain  
out beyond the village  
limits and find  
out what  
was what.  
We villagers don't  
understand him,  
but we know he must be  
quite  
great.  
Someone even says there's  
a faint halo around  
his head, visible  
only to the more advanced  
souls.  
This is probably  
true, for why would an advanced  
soul lie  
to anyone?  
So Mike (our mystic) climbed  
the sacred mountain  
a week  
ago when there  
was a quadruple conjunction  
of some planets I'd heard  
of and some I hadn't  
(I don't understand  
these things, but I did  
think the air  
smelled different that  
day).  
Mike meditated (you know, where  
you sit  
down and do holy  
things to yourself)  
and then climbed the  
mountain just like he owned  
the damn thing.  
We all watched from the  
bottom.

He was at the top about  
half an hour,  
maybe receiving his  
instructions,  
and then he came back  
down.  
We all gathered around  
him and asked him what  
he saw, what he learned,  
what he heard, how did it  
feel?  
Mike rolled  
his eyes up and  
began to speak in a  
quiet but firm voice, saying:  
"I have been to the mountain  
top.  
I have had  
an Experience.  
I cannot possibly tell you  
how it really was.  
I must speak in veiled  
terms for your own good.  
I say unto you,  
'Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
What's false is false,  
And what's true is true.'"  
As he spoke,  
I thought I noticed a faint  
shimmer of light  
around his holy head.  
It is humbling to be  
able to live in the  
same village with  
one who knows,  
and who knows  
he knows,  
and has a  
halo according  
to some reports.



## Howling at a Real Moon

What is illusion,  
really?  
Is it the satisfied look on a rich  
lady's face?  
Is it a boy smelling the evening  
breeze as he rubs his magic  
lamp and has  
visions?  
Is it the mathematically  
maternal thrill of writing a tight  
algorithm for a computer?

What is reality,  
sort of?  
Is it the headache after too  
much ice cream too  
fast?  
Is it the birds before a spring  
sunrise singing their hearts  
out?  
Is it the symphonic  
climax hurled out  
of a conductor's  
baton?

If we knew what illusion is,  
would it be found but a  
word?  
If we knew what reality is,  
how long before the knowing  
were but a memory?

Give me a breath at a time  
and keep your reality.  
Show me a round  
orange moonrise  
and I will fully embrace illusion.

I look into your eyes  
and I see the absolute  
reality of illusion.  
Then it is that I forget the  
illusion of reality.

## **Humid Evening**

I finger gently the meshy steel diagonals  
in our manufactured backyard fence  
as lightning bugs dazzle a slow-dance  
in the swimmy summer-wet air.

The therapeutic pendulum of a breeze-driven  
willow branch entrances me, and merely glancing  
at our telephone pole mutely poking into the yellow  
setting sky flares a human fragrance in me.

Grasp me by the arm and try to feel  
my feelings if you can, as flimsy and confused  
as the evening sounds reflecting about our  
house and joining the silence of grass.

Praise the Lord of Emptiness as evening's first  
star suggests its way through the stratosphere,  
retinas all over the city tickling with its improbable  
light. Breathe the whole slippery sky with me.

Kings have died failing to acquire a splinter of our  
well-being. Look at the grass and the fireflies and the  
fence, all swimming in a soup of quaintly offered  
love from some source unknown despite knowers.

## **I, Not It**

"It makes me sad, or mad, or glad,"  
says my friend Marge.  
"This It is all in life I've had,  
and It's quite large.

"My It brings in my every mood  
and guides my thoughts.  
It even guides my choice of food,  
makes shoulds and oughts.

"This It is pulling all of me  
down toward the ground  
with unrelenting gravity  
as if I'm bound."

Then one tells Marge to take the "t"  
away from "It"--  
that Christ expired on the "t"  
to make us fit.

When all that's left of "It" is "I,"  
there's no excuse  
to blame an "It" or question why  
you get abuse.

The "I" is God as much as you  
and is pristine.  
Your freedom all to God is due,  
serene, unseen.

## **Ignorance Implicit**

The flowers bloom.  
The wind blows.

The president's soldiers torture  
their prisoners before cameras.

The flowers bloom.  
The wind blows.

Spam infests the world's e-mailboxes.

The flowers bloom.  
The wind blows.

US lawyers advise that torturing is legal  
as long as you mean well.

The flowers bloom.  
The wind blows.

The Internet hosts vicious viruses  
created by the brilliant ignorant.

The flowers bloom.  
The wind blows.

Partisan hatred pours out of talk shows  
and animates political seekings.

The flowers bloom.  
The wind blows.

## **Illumination**

Full moon through the trees  
reflects the Lord of Being—  
some just think it's neat.

Copyright © 2021 by Alan Harris, All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Innerness**

How potent is the silent voice within the heart--  
like roses screaming quietly  
at the top of their scents.  
Our inner self turns a valve here,  
flips a switch there,  
rechannels a thought, all undetected,  
guiding the mind with commands never heard by ears.

We inhale a vital force sent up from the sun,  
full of planetary power, star strength,  
universal unity.  
We exhale such love as we can muster from our  
little microverse,  
radiating peace into nearest air  
and farthest galaxies.

We breathe our relentless ripples  
onto shimmering oceans of spirit.  
Each star hears our silence.  
Our mental voice imprints itself  
on a forgetless tablet of inner space,  
indelible as a baby's first cry.

When we listen, the cold wind carries  
the moan of mother earth  
and the rising moon reflects  
the sighs of setting sun.  
Those who hear the universe  
humming its silent symphony  
learn to love each lento chord.

Strum my heart, you silent waves of love,  
with your tuneful touch,  
and help me sing the song of space  
in the sanctum of my skull.

## **The Inside Door**

What, to go out through the inside door,  
is gained and lost and revealed?  
What if some organ resigns early  
or an oncoming car presents crashdom  
when yet no I in me prefers cessation?

From jelly and muscle and bone  
did birth make me me?  
Get away, I heartily say--  
I rode this body into solidness  
and trained it in the school of earth.

Down it goes, you say?  
Slips off me overcoatlike?  
Whoever in me is my inner me  
says "Wasn't that life a honey?"  
as out I slip through the inside door

and maybe muse  
"Well, well, well"  
spaciously for 800 years or so  
until some earthbound man  
has too many beers and

gets his wife or his woman  
gently to beckon me  
down to her womb  
for another grade  
in school.

## **An Instrument of Heaven**

You've played the organ and piano  
at this corner church  
for more than 700 Sundays,  
and the Wednesday choir rehearsals  
that went with them  
along with Saturdays  
of practice and preparation.  
You've prayed with your fingers  
as our pastors have prayed with sermons.

The organ is a noble instrument  
that brings to human ears  
the music of the spheres,  
and you yourself have been  
a willing instrument  
of the Unseen Hand  
that moves our world  
toward beauty, peace, and truth.

The organ only makes the sound.  
Your hands and feet only play the keys.  
Your eyes only read the notes.  
But God has told you in your heart of hearts  
to bring His voice to human ears,  
and you have said, "I will."  
He has made abundant use of your  
obedient mind and body to channel  
a bit of heaven into a troubled world.

You now step down  
and turn your keyboard over  
to other willing hands,  
but you'll return to play again.  
Since God has played you for this long  
as His obedient instrument,  
He will never let you rust away unused.  
He will set your hands to other tasks.

The sounds of your Sunday music  
remain only briefly  
within the sanctuary walls,  
but they will echo down through the years



within the hearts of those of us  
whom they have nourished.

To Linda, with love,  
From Alan

(Written in 1991, discovered  
and posted in 2014)

Copyright © 1991 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Intermission**

There can come a moment  
when stillness reigns,  
when the actor in the mind  
is curtained away from view,  
when reading is unneeded  
though the book be open.

Images stream in and out  
with no conscious guidance  
or disturbance, each  
morphing into the next.

With animation suspended,  
whole libraries may be  
now serenely renounced,  
classrooms unattended,  
conversations unengaged,  
writing saved for a later muse.

Is this interlude a taste  
of the long and quiet phase  
that humans call heaven?  
An after-state wherein we  
reap the ecstasy we sowed  
while living the virtues?

For now the mind  
is permitted its silence,  
and the heart and soul  
their benign repose.

## **Interpreting Geese**

A flock of Canada geese  
flies overhead,  
honking whenever  
honks are needed.

One goose veers  
away on its own  
to the left.  
Another splits right.

Zen awareness might  
say, "Ah, yes: the  
goose and the goose  
and the flock. This is."

A philosopher might  
see three divergent  
realities coming  
into being above.

An ornithologist  
might ahem and  
expertly affirm, "Yes,  
geese will do that."

According to a poet:  
"Feather-flung loners,  
ecstatic with freedom, fly  
straight to their unknowns."

Hunters say blam.

## **Introduction**

Beneath my friendly laugh,  
down where you can't see--  
worms.

Quiet, warm worms  
from a soiled past.  
No needs have they,  
secure in my all.

They meditate behind  
my generosity,  
ride calm and innocent  
in my essence,  
come with me everywhere  
through anger,  
comfort,  
love.

I must apologize.  
Not even a fish would want them.

Anyway--here, meet my worms.  
They have no names.

Do yours?

## **An Inward East**

To calm a care or soothe an anger storm  
you pause to breathe your vital inside sun  
and, richly quiet with its steady glow  
of coremost tenderness and flooding peace,  
you reinterpret body's aching bones  
as levers placed for mystic ministry,  
propelled and infinitely smiled upon  
by forces which, when tapped, give tenfold strength.  
You find your earth eyes lidded from the room  
and focused now on lightened higherness.

In light we are as one, beloved friend.  
How can a doubt or fear feel more than mere  
when in and up we set our inner sight  
to see a splendor further east than east?

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **It All Rises**

Slicing the mountain  
with a cool silence you can smell,  
slivers of pink light  
rub and brush the crags.  
My ribs thrill out past the horizon.

Weaving this sunrise  
of mind,  
heart,  
spirit,  
we immortally must kiss  
from across a smiling distance.

The euphoria I feel  
embracing your possibilities  
proves underneath all doubt  
there is a yes  
of stranger stronger scentedness  
(sleeping fifty million winks a second)  
than possibly any manufactured no.

## **Itinerant**

On my electric wire  
a bold red cardinal  
brimming with eons  
of joyful songs  
loudly greets the day  
from his overflow

while I on my lawn  
try to reconstruct  
from tuneful parts  
an ancient whole  
before he flies  
to another yard.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## January Adagio

Tonight at 10:30 I went out  
for my walk. In the distance  
I heard a major commotion  
of geese. At first I thought  
a flock might fly overhead,  
though the hour was far too late  
for geese to be aloft.

But the sound wasn't moving.

I heard a train's rumble,  
then its mournful horn.  
A freight was crossing  
the railroad bridge  
over the Fox River  
close to where the geese  
were overnighing.

As I turned around toward home  
I still could hear them fret and scold  
in chaotic counterpoint with  
the diesel's basso continuo.

And the stars tonight burned  
bright holes in the sky, decorating  
bare tree branches overhead  
like lingering holiday lighting.

After the train had rumbled off  
to where nocturnal trains all go,  
the neighborhood assumed a hush  
perturbed only by my footsteps.

Hardly anything is quieter  
than distant sleeping geese  
and star-bespeckled trees.



## **Jazz**

Jazz is  
freedom  
in a box.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Job Interview

Through my windows  
I see your windows and frame,  
your curtains, shutters, and paint,  
but I know zilch of the private  
hassles and jollities in your house.

I properly inquire about your degree,  
your courses, your work history,  
and then watch you dance  
your verbal employment jig.  
But I must not ask into the chasms  
of your being  
where lies the real you--  
such would be corporate taboo.

I do hear that catch in your voice  
over a certain part of your past.  
I do see that eagerness  
to dwell on a fleeting achievement.

I am Sigmund Freud  
analyzing your vocational dreams,  
and you are Napoleon Hill  
thinking and growing rich.  
You are strategizing on your side  
of the chessboard by all the rules  
as I offer gambits here and there,  
then inscrutably castle.

Whole dictionaries of words remain  
unspoken in our 45 ticking minutes,  
and yet somehow  
I recognize my story in yours.  
You and I are each someone  
struggling to carve out  
a safe and joyful survival from  
a murderously mysterious world.  
We are each a failingly successful,  
triumphantly agonizing being  
making small steps  
toward what appears right.

You misread me  
if you see in me a company man.  
I am in a way you,  
on trial,  
absorbing what meaning  
can be made of our encounter.

You wonder what I am thinking  
as I speak glibly of opportunities,  
and I wonder who you really are  
as you smile with hollow confidence.  
Will I give you a favorable rating?  
Will you make us a good employee?  
Fate has hung you and me  
in her balance  
on either side of this empty table.

When we go out from our room,  
we will shake hands,  
smile pleasantries,  
and fade back into our  
respective anonymities,  
each hoping we have done  
right by the other,  
and each knowing we haven't,  
quite.

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Juggler**

The blue-black plate of sky  
Teeters on a point of zenith  
Like a juggler's disc  
Twirling on a stick.  
Intrepid owls (2)  
Interrogate the  
Intruding moon  
Until splashjangling  
Dawn splits  
Night blue into  
A billion oranges  
Molded into a smolder.  
Up comes the sane sun  
Wheeling the lunatic  
Moon on ahead and  
Tumbles it off the brink  
Of spinning sky,  
To be caught by the  
Juggler and thrown up  
There perhaps again.

## **July Brushstrokes**

gradual sliding low of Sol...  
flashings out when trees allow...  
sidewalk bathed in fading light...  
yellow-green this muted hour...  
whitening sky holds twilit breath...  
shadows paint each passing trunk...  
cicadas sing "six weeks till frost"...  
hints of night inspire bird choirs...  
all scent all sound all inner yes...

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Just Asking**

I ask how eyes know when to wake  
and lovers, when to love,  
how engines feel when pulling trains,  
why planets need to spin.

Does every point in cosmic space  
touch every other point?  
Can money buy creative thought?  
Is dark the price of light?

Does every pain result in gain?  
Does living have a goal?  
And what's left out when parts fall short  
of summing up the whole?

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Karma Yoga**

Living every hour  
in the exact middle  
of my weaknesses,  
I work some more.

Knowing the ways  
I fell apart before  
and took poor paths,  
I work some more.

To piece together  
my fragmentary  
feelings for peace,  
I work some more.

Pretty sure I will  
later fail to restrain  
some urges within me,  
I work some more.

When all of my jobs  
on earth are done and  
I'm in and out of heaven,  
I will work some more.

## Keeping Here

I wake to morning's  
window-filtered sounds  
and hear a  
cardinal outside  
my bedroom,  
daring to fill  
the early air with a  
questioning refrain:

"Where's here?  
Where's here?  
Where's here?"

An idea flashes brainward  
out of recent sleep as,  
having risen from my bed,  
I stand within  
a splash of sunlight  
on the carpet--  
an idea taking on words:  
"How you feel  
is from what you do.  
To feel differently,  
do differently.  
Start here."

I stand still in the light.  
"What changes shall I make?" I ask  
whoever's listening,  
outdoors or innerly.

The same cardinal,  
broadcasting  
guru-like atop  
the neighbor's  
television tower,  
gives simple counsel  
three times again:

"Keep here.  
Keep here.  
Keep here."

Odd,  
but on the farm  
when I was young  
I used to shoot  
birds  
with my BB gun.



## **Kind of**

Is is all biz  
Seem smacks of dream  
Why goes with cry  
Love always in the of the from the out of the all through the

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Lawful Body**

Someone or I built me a body  
to serve as my earthly house,  
which, so long as I respect her laws,  
carries me without complaint.

Whoever I am wants too much  
sometimes and overstrains my body  
by climbing to futile heights  
or pleasuring too much,

but body keeps me legal,  
staging strikes and slowdowns,  
suing for her rights  
through ills and pains.

All around me I see  
billions of other bodies too,  
each tethering her curious occupant  
from straying too far into folly.

Lawful body constrains caprice  
with motherly insistence until,  
strained and weakened, body herself  
gravitates into a waiting grave.

When earth-given body releases me  
and melts again into her humid earthy matrix,  
I will float freely to an ethereal electricity  
to greet forgotten shining friends.

Dust falls to greater dust, indeed,  
but soul buoys up to radiant Soul  
like a child rushing gratefully armward  
into all it knows of the maternal Eternal.

## **Leaf Dance**

Breath of a little whirlwind  
on a warm November day  
plucked up some leaves  
from the neighbor's pile  
and danced them in circles.

Arrested from our walk,  
we both stood amazed  
at the twirly bouncing  
of lively dead leaves  
above a clackety street.

Invisibly obvious, our airy  
ballerina pirouetted there  
a full three minutes before  
releasing her larger leaves  
to the ground as in a tease.

But still we saw tiny wisps  
of lighter leaves and dust  
spinning further away  
until nothing remained  
but a transparent grace.

## Letting Go

March rattling the windows  
and thoughts buzzing in my brain  
keep me from dropping into  
a Sunday afternoon nap.

Outside, the musical moans  
of swaying trees rise and fall,  
and a persistent branch  
rubs on the shingles above.

Sinking now in spite of the noise,  
I drift down through my senses  
toward the silky bliss  
that beckons below.

Just at the point of falling free,  
I hear a windy crescendo  
play catchy rhythms  
on the window panes again.

Allow me my nap, dear windows.  
I am swaying with the trees.  
Let me fall into the source.  
Let me fall....

## Library

Books of mine,  
silent friends  
on the shelves,  
rows and rows of  
spines erect,  
ready for reception.

Plodding through  
the pages of these friends,  
will I find any life?  
Any electricity?

I find concepts  
built upon concepts  
built upon concepts,  
traded and stolen and  
borrowed and twisted  
from one to another  
until the cows  
drink milk shakes.

My friends in rows are  
corpses in a mental  
mausoleum.  
I wish them well  
in their neat slots,  
but I must live awake  
and alive and alert  
and aware.

Thank you, my friends,  
for the memories,  
but mother moment  
jerks me to attention.  
I will sing the now  
into the here  
until I join you  
upon the shelves.

## Listening to Christmas

Have you ever heard snow?  
Not the howling wind of a blizzard,  
not the crackling of snow underfoot,  
but the actual falling of snow?

We heard it one night in Wisconsin  
quite unexpectedly  
while walking up a hill  
toward our cabin in the woods,  
a soft whisper between footsteps.  
We stopped, switched off our flashlights,  
and just listened.  
All around us in the darkness  
we heard the gentle fall  
of snow on snow.  
No wind, no sound  
but the snow.

Have you ever heard Christmas?  
Not the traffic noises in the city,  
not the bells and hymns and carols,  
beautiful as they are,  
not even the laughter of your children  
as they open their presents--  
but Christmas itself?

Have you been by yourself  
and just sat and listened to the silence within,  
patiently, without letting the mind  
race to the next Christmas chore?

Perhaps if you have,  
you felt the pulse of all humanity  
beating in your own heart.

Perhaps you noticed  
an outflowing of love  
for all your brothers and sisters  
on the earth,  
a soft sense of Oneness  
with all that lives.

In the silence of a snowy night,  
listen intently, holding your breath,  
and you may hear snow on snow.

Serene, alone,  
undisturbed by thought,  
listen to the silence in your heart,  
and you may hear Christmas.

## Looking Forward

Long after I have laughed my last,  
corn husks will still flap and cackle yearly  
in the frosty wind.  
Hopeful farmers will plant and reap  
and worry through every weather.

Statuesque cows will still moo and moan  
their mantras low like tubas in metal sheds  
incensed with daily hay.

In select suburbs far from farms,  
ladies with airs will continue tinting  
and teasing their failing hair  
or flashing acquired fashionabilities  
into their lighted full-length mirrors--  
ladies who will still ache at night  
for a gleaming knight  
between snorings  
of their well-off wimp.

By then I will have poked  
this life's reapings and hopings  
up through my cranial chimney  
and passed beyond breath.  
With no nose to interfere,  
coffee may smell richer.  
Free of fumbling fingers,  
I may play Bach heaven-like  
on an unmoolecular piano.

Then, by and by and by,  
in my next soulbeat,  
I could emerge again  
from a provided womb,  
suck into baby lungs  
a deep inspiration,  
and cry within my new hell  
for a heaven of love and milk.

I'm wondering now if,  
rather than burden my brain  
with all of this forward thought,  
I need to read a good mystery.

## Love Is

Sunlight twinkles yellow  
off the neighbor's tree leaves,  
stirred by a sibilant breeze.  
All is well.

The sky is empty, empty, empty, and azure.  
Do not worry.

The rose window decal  
on our east window glows  
with what glass and plastic know of love--  
crimson, aqua, yellow, and amethyst,  
concentric in twelves.  
It is all right.

Your eyes shine behind mine,  
energizing my thoughts,  
giving off a gentle voltage.  
Fret not.

You are more than you are.  
You are the prism,  
the white light,  
the rainbow,  
and more.

Notice your depth sometime  
as you awaken from sleep,  
and rest assured  
that depth never dies.

Serenity,  
a smooth current of calmness,  
surrounds.  
Permeates.  
Is.  
Is.  
Is.

It is too silly now to say  
what love is,  
or that I love you.  
Words trouble the serenity.  
Definitions becloud the sky.

Tremulant leaves  
twinkle sunlight.  
The sky is empty, pure.  
The rose window  
glows with color.  
Your eyes,  
your deep eyes--  
enough.



## **A Love Song**

From heart of space  
all gift all give  
no star too small □  
to hold it all.

Where up a flower  
how down a cloud  
can any heart  
with love unbloom

One breath of spring  
one second on  
the spatial clock  
but oh the breath

When bliss is work  
and silence bliss  
up down our cord  
no song unsings

All alls need more  
all mores need all  
yet love is nearer  
than purest most

## **Lullaby**

*For a new grandchild*

When Mom sings me a melody  
And with a kiss turns down the light,  
I drift off free and lazily  
To join the mysteries of the night.

Across the sky soft clouds go by,  
In each a face I've known by day.  
They sing and sigh a lullaby  
Which soothes, delights, and fades away.

In waves unknown I rock alone  
As if my bed were a little boat  
That sails a zone of undertone  
And keeps me safe as I dream and float.


Now the clouds begin to wane and thin,  
The last one showing my mother's face.  
She strokes my chin and brings me in  
From far adrift to her warm embrace.

Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

# Lullaby

Alan Harris

[www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

 = 88

Voice

*mf* When Mom sings me a

Piano

*mf*

mel - o - dy And with a kiss — turns down the light, I

drift off free and la - zi - ly To join the mys - ter - ies

of the night. A - cross the sky soft clouds go by, In

The first system of the musical score for 'Lullaby'. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are 'of the night. A - cross the sky soft clouds go by, In'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand.

each a face — I've known by day. They sing and sigh a

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'each a face — I've known by day. They sing and sigh a'. The piano accompaniment maintains the same rhythmic pattern as the first system.

lull - a - by which soothes, de - lights, and fades a - way. In

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics 'lull - a - by which soothes, de - lights, and fades a - way. In'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

waves un - known I rock a - lone As if my bed were a

The first system of the musical score for 'Lullaby' consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are 'waves un - known I rock a - lone As if my bed were a'. The piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. The melody is simple and lullaby-like, with a slow tempo indicated by the wide intervals and the nature of the piece.

lit - tle boat That sails a zone of un - der - tone And

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line lyrics are 'lit - tle boat That sails a zone of un - der - tone And'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same simple, lullaby-like melody. The key signature remains one flat.

keeps me safe as I dream and float. Now the clouds be - gin to

The third system of the musical score concludes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line lyrics are 'keeps me safe as I dream and float. Now the clouds be - gin to'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same simple, lullaby-like melody. The key signature remains one flat.

## Lullaby

wane and thin, The last one show-ing my mo - ther's face. She strokes my chin and

The first system of the musical score for 'Lullaby' consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand, with chords providing harmonic support.

brings me in From far a - drift to her warm em-brace

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The vocal line has a half note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F5, and a quarter note G5. The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic pattern, with the right hand playing chords and the left hand providing a bass line.

*p* *rit.* *pp* *ten.*

The third system concludes the piece. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The tempo is marked *rit.* (ritardando). The system ends with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and a *ten.* (tenuto) marking over the final notes. The piano accompaniment features a final chord in the right hand and a sustained note in the left hand.

## **Luminance**

Room lamps are all on—  
how become this bright within?  
Not a slight question.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Mahler's 5th Symphony**

Overfull fountain,  
he rises abundantly  
from where springs  
are fed, creates from  
why hearts must beat  
timpanic against  
gravitation.

His concerted breezes  
blow confusing beauty in  
through windows where  
merely walls once were.

Triumph, sorrow,  
fire, spirit,  
love, joy--  
all play and pray  
in sonic sanctum.

After the applause  
we bring our amazement  
home and listen to  
the wallpaper sing.



## **Making a Tree**

"Make us a tree," said the master.

"We have no wood, no leaves," despaired the pupil.

"Plant a seed," said the master.

"We have no tree to make a seed," despaired the pupil.

"Search for a tree," said the master.

"We live in a desert," despaired the pupil.

"Go to a forest," said the master.

"We would have to bid farewell," despaired the pupil.

"Farewell," said the master.

"Farewell, Master; I am leaving," declared the pupil.

"Then stay," said the master with a gentle smile,  
"for if you are leaving, your branches will  
soon bear seeds."

## **Man Walking**

There is a man  
walking behind me  
on Wood Street  
in Chicago.

He can't know  
my heart hums  
a surging theme  
from Movement 1  
of Mahler's Tenth.

He can't know  
why I am walking  
on Wood Street  
in Chicago.

And why am I?  
It takes too long  
to think about.

Who is this man  
behind me,  
walking?

What flavors  
his feelings?  
What obstacles  
has he overcome?  
What song  
is in him?

I somehow am  
this man walking  
on Wood Street  
in Chicago.

I am  
his walkingness  
behind me,  
his grapplingness  
with his day.

I can only know  
my own form  
but he and I  
are breathing of  
the same Breath.

Mahler's Tenth  
plays on within me  
as I enter a building.

The man continues  
along the street  
paying absolutely  
no attention to me,

this man walking  
on Wood Street  
in Chicago  
who I am.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Mary and the Moderns

Her name was Mary  
and she was regional and regal,  
and Gabriel whispered to her, beautifully--  
swift Gabriel, God's holy messenger.

Reconvening Congressmen  
besiege each other with  
how are each other, fine.

And hearing the prophecy of Jesus,  
she began to prepare her heart and mind  
and immaculate body for holy duty.

Oklahoma will do, said one.  
Where will the rest of you be?

Rounding her hips toward God  
she was able to receive and conceive  
in a glorious burst of almighty love  
from above.

Catch any fish? Well, not  
very many big ones. We just  
missed the heavy season.

She murmured hymns thoughtfully  
to herself during the growing  
of all that was in her.

Around by the back fence--  
you know how my yard's  
laid out. Well, I dug up  
a little patch there for  
Myrna's flowers this spring.

She prayed calmly during the warm  
weather in her country that bade noise  
and fear to cease.

Truly, friends, the Lord shall  
forgive you if in deepest awe and  
reverence you approach his  
holy throne and enter this house  
of worship and give generously  
of your possessions.

And by the time the welling was large  
enough to attract innocuous attention  
and friendly suspicion, she was in love  
with her own womb and what it contained,  
so that no calumny could burden her  
conscience and no suspicion her calmness.

Found this little place  
back off the highway where  
the truckers all eat.  
Really a sharp little place.

The sun shone upon her and the son  
grew within her and she was with pun  
without laughter with joy without pride.

Jenny will be a senior  
next year if she ever gets  
going on her algebra. You  
know, she just cannot grasp  
mathematics--it must be  
her weak spot or something.

She bore an infinite rebel from her  
own bone cage and sent him into the  
torn world to mend and heal it  
before it should devour itself  
in greed and fear and sloth.

When speaking in public, one  
should never consciously or  
unconsciously alienate  
the listeners, or one will not  
succeed in communicating  
one's message to them.

And respect for him was not there,  
but since he was truly a vibrating  
human with a divine mission,  
he asserted and healed and  
gently brought stones down  
upon him which had been reserved for  
such a rebel and agitator, and he  
died with a brilliant aura about him  
and without tears and with love.

It is my firm opinion  
that our city government  
cannot long survive without  
an increase in the sales  
tax percentage, and the time  
to act is now, without delay.

## **Material and Soul**

Those captivated by materialism  
are walking and driving and flying about  
blind to the soul, to the essence. Why?

Things that can't be seen aren't there,  
they ever. The very substance of us  
and the Universal Divinity--denied.

Self trumps Soul in their being,  
but all Self sees is Self and Matter  
and billions of threatening Others  
to impress or compete with or kill.

Soul, being One with Unity, is missed.  
Bombs explode. Snideness burgeons.  
People bounce and hit and hurt  
like a pinball in its machine.

Awaken, humans.  
Be.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## May Nocturne

Half a cool moon  
peekaboos along through leafing trees  
over a suburban sea of haunting sounds.

I follow the dim white sidewalk,  
hearing rhythmic whispers  
from my hush puppies,  
when suddenly a vigilant Pekinese  
barks out its puny protest and retreats,  
chain dragging against wood.

Evening's sonic ambiance  
flows intravenously through me,  
every outer sound seeming to well up  
from some ghostly inner depth.  
As I move along, a faraway car honks  
a velvet chord into my core.  
Now a strobing jetliner  
thunders overhead  
and reverberates in my belly,  
the after-rumblings in its wake  
fading away into a silence  
too immense and profound  
for human thought to fathom.

I stop beside a fragrant lilac bush  
and stare at the sky's endless upness.  
The waning moon seems content  
to be quietly lunar,  
lopsidedly smiling from its effortless perch.

Aloud I ask the moon,  
"Where am I?"  
A startled bird flutters in the lilacs  
to let me know I am right here.

## May Opening

May is most  
too awfully grand  
for this birdsung  
treebreezed  
dewdazzled  
man.

All winter I worked  
freeze-dried and  
to the world dead  
in my closed-up  
house

until this annual  
now, when May  
gives me to  
inhale vigor's gist  
from its generous  
air.

Today I've opened  
windows and doors  
to let livingness in  
and release husks of  
flies and moths and  
thoughts.

My breathing replete  
with May's mixed balm  
of aromatic everyness,  
I've fallen again fully  
open.



## **A Meditation**

In the where of almost  
lies more somejoy  
than define inchly gives.

Streamtake and heartgive  
are so many too softness  
for headly grasp to box.

If seldom all many center  
in one boundless allitude,  
one oneity can still still.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Meeting

Letters to mail  
and a twilit beckon  
from the dimming sky  
tempted tonight  
my walk to the mailbox  
that never seems  
to come to me.

At my first turn  
the fat, lop-lit moon  
shouldered me  
and whispered,

"I'm here with you,  
never not here.  
Turn you to dust  
or turn you to ash,  
I will be here."

I mailed my letters  
and walked for home.

So simply it came to be--  
my ageless friend and me  
slipping past tree and tree.

## **Messages from Beyond**

**(Deceased persons have somehow carved their own epitaphs onto their gravestones.)**

I like it here. Nobody ever telephones to sell me siding or insurance.

Why did my nurse let in that old-timer with the scythe?

There were errors in my life review. Why me? I'm suing.

Wow! Great near-death experience. Let's go back now.... Hello?

Hell isn't so bad. It may need work, but it's better than Chicago.

My life was a waste, but I did donate my ashes to science.

Harps sound pretty, but not a billion harps at once. I'll take hell.

Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.

Some idiot ahead of me in the tunnel turned off the white light.

Copyright © 1994 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

# Meteor Shower over Tucson

**November 18, 2001**

For Brian and Patrick

3 a.m. stars were holding  
brightly tight to their dome  
as desert chill challenged three  
watchers alarmed from bed.

The Big Dipper's handle  
had fallen straight down,  
but upness was everywhere  
and never all to be taken in.

Earthbound, we flashlit our  
paths around backyard cacti  
while overhead, quick meteors  
like flaming needles pierced  
and sewed at the night.

Several arrived each minute  
but seldom did any two  
claim the same piece of sky.  
Some blazed up so bright  
they lit up the desert floor--  
doubt but believe.

We embodied three generations,  
we watchers who stood or sat  
or reclined on a blanket.  
Endless depth boggled our eyes  
yet we little asked and less knew  
why we were alive just then.

Boy, father, grandfather were we.  
What all might have happened  
or not happened in our three lives  
to cause any of us to be absent?

We had beaten unmathematical odds  
to meet for this familial, communal  
sky harvest, as had the listening lizards  
who heard our "Hey!" and "Whoa!"  
and "Did you see that one?"

And how better to bond  
than under a needled infinity?

## **The Middle Way**

When the possible  
splits inelegantly  
into yes and no  
or love and hate  
or life and death,  
a maybe may be  
found in a flower  
around the corner,  
already half opened  
and aromatic.

If a mindbox  
has been closed,  
sealed with tape,  
and addressed for  
a wrong journey,  
the stewing inside  
may blow it open  
along a road up  
to now unseen--  
new steps await.

When any love  
demands any hate  
and gets its way,  
that way is poison,  
but when any hate  
allows for any love  
and acts within it,  
possibilities arise.

Measuring won't find  
the Middle Way,  
nor asking friends  
nor reading books,  
but work and watch,  
step by day,  
and strive and give,  
mile by year, until  
where isn't it?

## Midnight in Midwinter

Just the finest trace of snow fell  
unseen yet tingly on my face,  
and the streets were whitening under  
a semi-coating of this semi-snow.  
I knew the moon was up there but  
clouds were having their way.  
I walked familiar streets,  
my neighborhood oddly hushed,  
no traffic, dogs all quiet indoors.

Far off I heard the muffled horn  
of a diesel engine pulling its  
rumbling train along the single  
trunk line past the edge of town.  
With each crossing its wail and  
rumble became a little louder,  
and then each wail became quieter  
until silence comforted the streets  
like a forgiving mother after  
her child's necessary cries.

All of us had our way tonight--  
the snow was able to hint of itself,  
my footprints showed I'd been there,  
the train took some of the silence,  
and midnight was allowed its hush.

Now my coat is hanging to dry  
and I know where the moon is.

## A Millennial Date

I'm so glad we know of  
this magical forest--  
don't the clear waters here  
make us look younger?

End of the what?  
Oh, that.  
Here, let me pour you a Coke  
from our picnic cooler.

Diet or regular?  
With or without ice?

Of course, a toast--  
here's to this endless earth  
we've made and are made of.  
May our one-triple-nined  
planet contrive to survive  
this year of broadcast hysteria,  
and may the Christian  
clickover of 2000 somehow  
transform trumpeting holiness  
into selfless silence.

Magic tricks?  
No, I have none.  
There's so much magic  
here in this forest,  
here on this earth,  
here in our hearts,  
that any more  
would be less.

Safe this year, are we?  
As safe as we feel, I'd say--  
and as safe as we love,  
as safe as we give,  
as safe as everything  
we don't understand.

We are flies on a ceiling  
which is also the floor  
of a marvelous room above.  
Count that room's years base 10  
and it's a third millennium.  
Count them base God  
and oneness is far enough.

Another Coke?  
Yes, thank you.  
A toast to all the magic  
that keeps us safe  
and all the daring  
that keeps us magic.

## **Monsoon**

Downpour on the roof  
makes wet roaring in Tucson—  
now the desert smiles.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **The Monument**

Our elm began to die that spring, slowly.

Wanting stability in threat of change  
we ourselves searched all summer  
for a superlative glue,  
found it in our store of hardest ware,  
bought it dearly.

That fall our elm did die, slowly.

But we on variangled ladders  
refastened the fallen leaves with  
peerlessly permanent glue,  
then stood back and looked.

Still it stands:  
crisp, dead;  
cutting the winter wind.

Copyright © 1964 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Moodrider

How so up we go  
and so down,  
we moodriders,  
spirits abuilding  
and acrumbling.  
A day or peaceful two,  
then zapperoo,  
off we tumble from our  
pinnacle of hail-fellow peace into a  
tar barrel of angry gloom.

Pin me up on a bulletin board  
and study me, Mr. Doctor.  
Give me lithium or understanding  
or electric temples to make  
me cool.

Thank you.  
Now I see. I see the gentle  
love-waves shimmering  
in the atmosphere.  
I see WHAT IS--  
the sharp outlines of the furniture,  
the swaying trees.  
Here we are in reality,  
or what's left of it.

Peel me off the periphery of mortals,  
would someone? Why cannot I have  
the normal agonies of mankind?  
Why do I ride on a little toy boat through  
such choppy moodwaters?  
Give me a reason, please.

No, don't.  
It's all right.  
I see so many  
normal folks in such pain,  
caught in business envelopes of stuffy fright  
or pulsing with radioactive rap music  
or yammering in their beer.  
What right have I to ask that a corner  
of the universe be lifted so I can peek  
at God's underwear and understand  
why I am why I am?

I do my work and I pay my bills and I  
contribute to the coffers of  
such democracy as we have.  
Oh, I emote a bit unevenly,  
yes, I do.  
But then, Uranus doesn't  
rotate the same as the other planets do,  
and it still makes the charts.

Whatever the mood,  
there is a place that is here  
and a time that is now  
and a cracklingly deep intelligence  
smack in the middle of everydude,  
be he into  
pills or pajamas or private jets.

How so up we go  
and so down,  
with a smile,  
with a frown,  
slightly unpinned,  
scarf in the wind.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Moon and Mars Conjunct

Walking at night  
to the corner mailbox,  
breathing deeply of  
cool September air,  
I look up and see  
Mars by the full moon,  
quiet friends,  
like a tiny garnet  
by a round opal  
set in the sky's  
planetary ring.

A carful of teenage girls  
zooms by,  
emanating shrieks and  
laughs and  
whoops,  
careening between curbs  
through our  
planned community.

The red taillights  
soon zigzag away  
into velvet distance,  
and silence prevails,  
broken now by  
this old mailbox accepting  
my letters with a chuff  
and a clanky groan.

I look skyward again.  
Mars and the moon,  
quiet friends still,  
stare winkless from the surface  
of the universe.

Has anything changed?  
Yes, my letters are  
in the mailbox;  
yes, the car has painted  
a picture in my ears;  
yes, the moon is  
imperceptibly  
closer to Mars now--  
but nothing deep  
has changed.  
The night has merely  
taken a breath.

## **Mother Greet's Newborn**

I see you have been  
traveling through the universe  
without a map again.

Welcome to earth, my friend.  
I breathe on you with my eyes  
and I hear you with my breast.  
You squall and you squirm,  
but you did come to this place,  
and I opened the door,  
so let's learn to be together.

As your first guide  
on this strange planet,  
I will introduce you to your body  
and mine and everything else.  
Let us proceed together now  
as companions.

Earth is not a bad place to live.  
There is much room here for love.  
There, there, there....  
Drink of the earth and sleep.

## **Mother's Secret**

### **A Ballad**

*Tell me a secret of living, dear Mother,  
a new one I've never been told--  
some hint about life to remember you by  
that will stay with me when I've grown old.*

"An overlooked secret of humans, my child,  
is that each is a seed that will flower,  
and that each has a future of limitless joy,  
whatever the pains of the hour.

"And I tell you that no love has ever been lost  
nor is anything out of place--  
that your work is to strive, to give and to know  
in this journey through time and space.

"Your grandmother told me the same when she died  
and I willingly pass it along.  
May your living go deeper than what you can see  
and your heart hear the Infinite Song."

*Now rest, dear Mother, and sleep your sleep  
in a region where pain is unknown.  
As long as I live I will treasure your words  
and will pass them along to my own.*

## **Muse on a Moonbeam**

Twinkle you don't  
but glow you do  
not yellow not white  
through my window.

Half the month I see you  
riding above my maple  
and I mostly ignore you  
because you're steady  
and I'm busy with trivia.  
I file you under L  
for later.

Since muses unused dry up  
in the dark of the moon  
(or so some poets fear),  
tonight I welcome your light  
as a loving underflow  
beneath my busy overflow.

Tuning into your glow  
far beyond the maple  
yet as near as here,  
I let my writing listen.

## **Music from Hannah**

When Hannah comes over to visit our place,  
She fetches our old violin from its case  
And places it under her chin to be played  
With its missing E-string and its horsehair all frayed.

Under Hannah Moore's unafraid, amateur touch,  
The violin squeals and scratches so much  
That sooner or later some listener will say,  
"Oh, Hannah, let's please put the violin away."

Pretty soon she snaps open the old trumpet case,  
Tries out the three valves, puts the mouthpiece in place,  
And blows such a blast for a trumpeter's call  
That the pictures all rattle and sway on the wall.

When Hannah brings over her flute, however,  
We can sit here and listen for nearly forever  
To her musical phrases both smooth and staccato  
Which pleasantly shimmer with a heartfelt vibrato.

She has listened to Mozart from A to Z,  
And she loves any Beethoven symphony;  
Carmina Burana, the Nutcracker Suite--  
The best compositions to her are a treat.

Our piano's been host to her musical fingers  
Playing Mozart sonatas with feeling that lingers.  
Just give her an instrument, fancy or poor,  
And you'll soon hear some music from Hannah Paige Moore.



# **Musical Mentor**

## **A Haiku Cycle**

Burrus was his name—  
Charles, my young band director  
for high school music.

Inspired and fearless,  
his musical soul was pure  
and he taught me well.

Schubert's "Unfinished"  
was my first portal to bliss  
in sonic heaven.

Mr. Burrus shared  
and inspired from his knowledge  
and musical heart.

He loaned me one day  
a distillation of sounds:  
record collection.

At home in my room  
with Tchaikovsky's "Pathetique"  
I deepened my soul.

Startling my young ears  
was Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring"—  
new fire was kindled.

Six years my senior,  
Chuck, my musical guru,  
had opened new doors.

He was criticized  
by Board of Education  
for novel efforts.

Music was his love—  
teaching it was his dharma—  
wagon hitched to star.

Recently we met  
after fifty years gone by—  
met again in joy.

Music's been the root  
of continuing flowers  
in my spirit's life.

"Gratitude" falls short—  
no mentor better than Chuck  
for my youthful muse.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **My Cow, My Guru**

My brown cow  
lives in the now.  
How?  
Nohow.

Quantity and time and hay slide  
through her unnoticed. She  
doesn't count her stomachs  
or her breaths or her days.

She seeks no acupuncture  
treatments, nor does she  
brew herbal teas.

Being the best she can be  
holds no interest for her as  
she grazingly meditates with  
slow-moving hooves and jaws  
over a grassy pasture.

Her Buddhist eyes see  
out and in all the way.

My cow knows an old, old mantra  
that she neither flaunts nor hides--  
when the world needs a moo,  
she gives it one.

As her swishing tail  
with Zen precision  
scatters a bunch of flies  
like unwelcome thoughts,  
my brown cow's gaze is  
inly intimating to me,  
"No how is there to now."

## **My Soul Is Something**

My soul is something like a train,  
switching, speeding, crawling, switching back.  
It backs up sometimes to remind itself of forwardness.

My soul is something like a prism,  
bending God's light in a billion-colored spectral show.  
Choose your color and live with me in a rainbow.

My soul is something like a bucket,  
collecting fluidities of thought,  
holding the heavier, splashing out the light.

My soul is something like nothing,  
appears invisible, absent, no-where,  
but these thoughts form in its shadow, now-here.

Copyright © 1982 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Napping in the Flavors

I slid downhill  
into my Sunday nap,  
and there I was again,  
swimming in an aromatic  
alphabet soup where all words  
ran together into a flavor.

If only poets could  
somehow write  
in immediate flavors,  
bypassing all  
those gangly,  
awkward letters  
spelling out unsavored,  
predigested words--  
then what a banquet  
people might enjoy.

But no, the poets  
have to keep on writing  
precious words about  
their bloodstained sunsets,  
their gold leaf autumns,  
their salty pepper,  
and I have no idea  
what other absurdities,  
just to jolt  
the taste buds  
on our jaded tongues  
away from neutral.

So anyway, my nap--  
I'm now awake,  
but have no splendid poems  
to bring back from my bliss.  
The soup there,  
by the way,  
was delicious.

Make your own.

## **needle's eye**

seeming  
triumphs,  
no avail

years of  
striving,  
renounced

done,  
all deeds

enjoyed,  
all joys

bought,  
all toys

suffered,  
all pains

goods  
nor  
dollars  
fitting  
through  
this  
eye

proceeding  
keepless,  
cleansed

on ahead,  
beyond this  
strict way,  
light seen

atomless,  
now out  
and into

# Needlework

## *Pokes and Turns of Thought*



Mankind's three deepest imponderables are infinity, eternity, and stupidity.



A good friendship, like a good river, comes back together after hitting a rock.



Even when things are all in place, they're very close to being out of place.



Most of us know someone whose purity of soul smells a bit like bleach.



Richest blessings move slowly because so much moves.



As for best-laid plans, mice do much better.



What could be sweeter than success, or briefer?



A teardrop is a liqueur to the future.



Quantitative psychology sticks its pins through living butterflies.



Retail marketing is the last frontier of nonsense.



Picture your worst fear. Now don't. Feel better?



Friends have love without vows, faithfulness without reason.



Who deserves to beg? At some time, everybody.



Ride in your car; ride in a mystery.



Insurance companies and doctors agree on one thing: nothing.



The kindness of a kind teacher is the kindest kindness of all.



Scientists have discovered few forms of life that behave more predictably  
than a manager on the way up.



When the chariot swings low for my soul, slip the horses some extra oats, okay?



Our commencement speaker revealed at length his firm grasp of the obvious.



Every new human being is an impossibility become inevitable.





Diet-conscious cannibals may eat only vegetarians.



Few besides Realtors love a snob.



In an emotional universe, kisses are the gravity.



Rumors are disagreeable to many; but then, so is the truth.



Anything you can get away with, you can't.



Christmas and a minimum universe both require a star and some generosity.



Friendships with others bring us heaven before heaven.



Brilliance needs words; character, pauses.



Fame is a sea that washes up new names like foam onto beaches.



### **Morning Prayer**

Now I wake me up from bed;  
I thank the Lord I'm still not dead.  
The Lord declined my soul to take  
for reasons which remain opaque.



Consensus usually belongs to the first one who dares to ahem and summarize.



"Employees Must Wash Hands" posted in the restroom translates to  
"Dine Elsewhere" even if no cockroaches are currently visible.



Need we be terribly surprised at the shortcomings of a world  
that is substantially run by the personalities who dominate meetings?



Today remains our only hope for tomorrow's yesterday.



Nothing deepens character like a firmly balanced dilemma.



The corn husk will never understand the corn.



### **Hint to Bottom-Line CEO's**

Reducing employees to digits  
may cause a cessation of widgets.



To find order in chaos, stop looking there.



Everybody is said to be unique, but most people are unique in about the same way.



Even as a bud, given water, becomes a flower,  
the office sycophant, given power, will become an autocrat.



For chest cold recovery, we must learn to always expectorate the unexpectated.



Leave the past behind you, but if part of it gets back in front of you, ask it why.



In truest love, giving and taking become moot.



The teeth of adversity grow directly behind the smile of fortune.



A local church begins as a fire in people's hearts,  
and sometimes ends as a structure whose windows no one wants to wash.



For TV addicts, death may cause minor personality changes.



He deceived her in ways which made her feel so loved.



A newborn's first thought: "Now what?"



Adolph Hitler was reputedly the Dictatorian of his high school graduating class.



It is better to have tried and failed than never to have failed at all.



After a motivational seminar I feel like new frosting on an old cake.



During college his deepest thought never got down as far as his knees.



### **Morning Glory Manager**

He smiled his way to power,  
enjoyed his sunny hour,  
then made some big boys frown  
and smiled his way back down.



A politician walked up to the Pearly Gates, shook St. Peter's hand vigorously,  
and announced, "God has my full support."



If you would hear the song of the infinite, listen quietly through the ends of your  
toes.



He carefully hid his feeling of superiority behind a smug expression.



All of life is a near-death experience.



Choose bravely; learn deeply.



Tears are from the soul wetting its pants.



Every day is more evidence of forever.



Motherhood is hereditary. If you never had a mother,  
chances are your children won't have one either.



After all I've been through, hell should be a breeze.



Dogs offer you humility, while cats invite it.



A shelf in need is a floor indeed.



Exits from the freeway of truth begin at a small angle.



Walk where your feet are.



The hell you feel is the one that's real.



Why can't we not worry by not wanting to worry?



Reality is what's left to us after all of our failures to find it.



Hell provides a room  
for people who assume,  
which gets some ventilation,  
but my, what a population!



Kind acts never die,  
and what is kind in yourself  
was waiting for you.



His dark blue suit had yes written all over it.



It's easy to be critical, but it's even easier to be bureaucratic,  
which is why bureaucracy is always ahead of its critics.



The caskets of beggars and vice presidents close with the same snap.



Hell is an archive of souls too interesting for heaven.



Technology offers a profusion of easier ways to live a life we don't understand.



If God had forbidden the snake too, would Adam and Eve have eaten it for dessert?



In his climb up the corporate ladder he was able to overcome all vestiges of past humility.



Senile? Not me. I can't remember the last time I forgot something.



A lottery consists of a few million poor fools chipping in to create a rich one.



God hells those who hell themselves.



Infinity is the quickest shortcut to the unknown.



People you have to interrupt so they can see your side, won't.



Nice days are more made than had.



I have my life well under control except for:

how much I eat,  
how much I sleep,  
what I say  
what I do.



You know you're getting old when you notice that  
your first name is being given to babies again.



**Pessimist:** looks both ways before crossing a one-way street.  
**Corpse:** didn't.



Is this a user-friendly universe?



Computers won't ever become minds until they can cry--and mean it.



Creativity leads to crisis, which leads to creativity.



American work ethic: busy is good, frantic is excellent, and burnt-out is sublime.



Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **A New Beatitude**

Blessed are the shrinks  
who'll listen to you hollah  
for just a hundred dollah  
when life completely stinks.

Copyright © 1999 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **A New Fading of Before**

Midnight will soon gift us with  
a new year and mummify the old  
as we hope ourselves the future.

Spots became so tight last year  
that nothing less than interrupt  
could calm my jangled vexation.

My body was less a trusty horse  
than a kicky, gimpy, hungry mule,  
and my mind, this quirky mind:

why did it need to fly and dive  
and not adhere to steadiness?  
and why so sometimes irritable?

Have I better to expect next year  
as the clock pulls in the minutes  
like a child sucking in spaghetti?

Resolutions I've tried--no luck--  
I'm strong first, but later weak.  
Luck I've tried, but it runs out.

This year I'm dropping formulas  
in favor of heartlight and love--  
not slushy, mind you, but real--

to hear a friend inside an enemy,  
catch the light in the eyes, listen  
into the endless layers of hurt.

On New Year's Eve I welcome  
this new fading of before as it  
allows a stronger shining of ever.

## Night

Upside-down flowers,  
are we not? With stems  
rooted upward into the deep?

Your soul, a kindly conduit,  
umbilicates your body  
into the placental night

that is fathomless and  
fully empty of  
where and when.

Take away the night? Absurd.  
One night minus one night  
equals one night.

Afraid of night?  
Dread the shadows?  
Learn from them.

Shadows tell stories,  
emit fragrant meanings,  
take you deeper than your feet.

Especially observe inner shadows,  
even if they speak no words--  
hear them out, and hear them in.

Look beneath shadows--  
drop through into wider shadows  
and feel safe in full bewilderment.

Afraid of unknowing?  
Make your peace with it,  
and your days may smile.

When you know definitely,  
the vast night will remind you  
that you know nothing.

When you wish for powers,  
the night may wisely  
hold them back.

But to be still with night  
may bring you as much truth  
as your heart can hold.

Night wants to abide  
underneath your day  
while you work--

wants to  
enwomb you  
between days.

Let night have its way,  
its gentle way--  
soften into its fullness.

Night is the container  
of nothing less  
than everything.

Copyright © 1998 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Night Light

Melancholy needs a walk,  
so out I carry it at 11 p.m.  
to study two universes,  
out and in.

Our neighborhood is dotted with  
random porch and yard lamps  
lighting the way for nobody  
and me.

An hour above setting in the west,  
our less-than-first-quarter moon  
smiles inscrutably like a queen  
in state.

Gliding through the trees, she  
offers only used rays to my heart,  
but light being now difficult to find,  
I accept.

With far-away stars shining only because  
they must, above a neighborhood where  
yard lamps are glowing, thanks to  
owners,

a breath now washes through my chest  
inviting me to turn my melancholy  
over to night's infinite matrix of Beings  
who shine.

I do, and return home with lungs full  
of light from outer and inner space,  
and from yard lamps left on for all  
who walk.

## **Night Thoughts**

Sleepless tonight inside my skin and bones,  
I feel that life must be a cruel curse--  
Begun with squall, cut off with pain and groans,  
A little joke told by the universe.

Why am I here? What accident of fate  
Breathed life into this form I occupy?  
What kind of God would bother to create  
A fragile human life, then let it die?

A voice within my heart says, "Mend your ways,  
And light inside your consciousness will gleam.  
Your bleakness, like the earth, delays dawn's rays,  
But love and hope will end your desperate dream.

"Depression fills agnosticism's night,  
But soon your soul must rise and follow light."

Copyright © 1985 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Nine Steps to a Poem**

Get born.

Have a confusing  
non-fatal childhood.

Grapple with religion  
and let it think it won.

Work at a job that has  
nothing to do with poetry.

Be amazed at how people  
can act the way they do.

Revel and fail in love x times  
before a settling occurs.

Struggle with y dilemmas  
and escape z threats to life.

Fail to let go of an idea  
that fails to let go of you.

Hold onto your pen while  
the poem writes itself.

## **No Darkness, No Diamonds**

If life is going well,  
don't write.  
Know why?  
'Cause you can't.

Know why?  
'Cause your creativity  
is all clogged up  
with contentment.

Writing amidst blessings  
is bleeding without wounds.

Why even read?  
Blow a tin whistle  
or talk to your uncle.

It's OK.  
Very OK.

## Nominal

Nothing got  
my mother's goat  
for long--  
she'd settle it.

I had become far too old  
to be calling her Mommy  
but still was  
and didn't want to  
but couldn't change.

One day while practicing  
my trumpet in the basement  
(in deference to TV watchers)  
I needed her attention  
and yelled a questioning  
"Hey?" up to the kitchen.

Catching my copout,  
she opened the door  
at the top of the stairs  
and announced,  
voice taut,

"My name's not Hey!  
If you don't want to call me  
Mommy then call me Mom."

And that settled it.  
I did after that.  
It was easy.



## **Notes on Work**

Beginnings are awkward.  
Continuings are strenuous.  
Easy peace won't last.  
Inner balance may.

Death?  
Doubtful.  
The graveyard's  
a door to more.

Requiem aeternam?  
Doubtful.  
New life,  
new work.

Why then work?  
Stagnation stinks.  
Starvation hurts.  
Endings aren't.

## **Now, Sweet Now**

When quiet has its way,  
a subtle glow may grow  
inside the heart's heart.

One's furnishings reflect  
a different cast of light  
when silence fills the room.

Consonance with core  
allows a laying down  
of petty weekday will.

All cells become as servants  
to a Master higher than  
the calls of sense and self.

True, jostlings and lacks  
and irritating chores  
await the coming down.

Dark evil, multiform,  
may offer up its dirt,  
and errors their regret,

but in this now, sweet now,  
a subtle glow is growing  
inside the heart's heart.

## **Oaks Near Town**

Black and green  
under sunlight  
stand these aged oaks,  
seasoned wisdom in wood.

"Believe, believe!"  
preaches the chapel bell  
from a spire in town  
to the congregated trees

which, distanced from doctrine,  
stand firmly unnoticing  
with their branches spread wider  
and trunks planted deeper

and roots drinking more serenely  
of a living water holier  
than even believing can ever  
believe belief capable of believing.

Clanging soon ends  
and relinquishes  
to the forest its  
sacred silence.

## **Old Hair**

Some say  
I am old  
bit at least  
my shadow's  
hair is black.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **An Old Man's Fancy**

Stepping through the front door  
into vernal flowerings,  
I sense a breeze of early manhood  
through my body-window.

There was family then,  
so much family  
that we almost didn't  
want that much--  
now just you and I  
and an occasional kiss.

There were trembling bushes  
and thrilling winds.  
Internal landscapes  
tumbled over each other,  
vying for supremacy  
with surging colors.

What landscape now?  
Same one as then,  
only someone drained  
the colors out of it.

Now, living is sensible,  
good, right.  
Then, it was exploding  
with overfelt feelings.

Young men march  
to any drummer they hear,  
while old men smile  
and tap on the table.

## **On Leaning**

Some think they leaned upon a stronger will  
when all that happened was this will had shone  
a light beam on some girder, deep and strong,  
within their own divinely buttressed soul.

Mistakenly, they felt this other will  
support their own, when really, all are leaning  
safe upon the same Eternal Strength  
which none of us can own, but all may share.

The light beam shows it's safe to turn within.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## One Glance

From its western podium  
the setting sun conducts  
for half an hour  
a symphony of colored sky:  
loud oranges and penetrating purples  
resolving into softer pinks and muted blues.

Under this musical sky,  
noticing your smile and breeze-tossed hair,  
I glance deep into the centuries  
behind your clear eyes--  
and I remember.

This moment was and is and will be.  
It never was not, and never cannot be--  
one precious moment of purest love,  
breathless and deathless.

Inner spirit needs only one glance, no more--  
no rush or embrace or kiss or promise.  
One glance opens your soul to me,  
and I know your soul and love your soul.

This musical sky is fleeting;  
these bodies will grow old and cold;  
but my memory of this one glance  
will never fade, as must the sky.

Our symphonic sun's bright colors  
have mellowed now to a somber gray  
as we walk along  
not knowing what to say.

## Ones

I spot a one.  
He changes lanes abruptly  
right in front of me, no signal.  
My teeth clench.  
He is number one in his machismo,  
and I a separate one in irritation.

Another one is following my car  
close enough to fill my mirror.  
I want to slow down  
and teach him a lesson,  
but instead I simmer along  
as one trapped.

I notice my cozy tailgater is flying  
an American flag above his window,  
loyal in some kind of patriotism,  
separate in some kind of jingoism,  
and I explore my intolerance.

By "ones" I mean sequestered minds,  
"me" people in a universe of "not me."  
Ones will celebrate their personal glory  
then perish into their self-created void.  
Ones will say we go around just once,  
done, with no later come-arounds,  
so that when the gustoed body quits,  
the mind joins Big Zero forever.

Why don't I think the same as that?  
With not one proof that holds a drop,  
I see a future human state  
unhindered by me-centric rivalries.

Birthing time and time again,  
evolving life by life eternally,  
it seems to me we'll someday  
give up being ones, and enter  
fully the community of Unity  
where competition isn't.

Though now I seem a one  
to any other one  
as the other one, for now,  
may seem a one to me,  
I hear an inner-speaking  
Spirit say that all of us  
are one with Utmost One  
and separated mainly by  
our walled-off minds and  
pretty bags of bones.



## **The Only Christian**

He went to church one cloudy morn,  
somewhat forlorn.  
He was the first one there, he guessed,  
and sat to rest.  
He studied all the stained-glass art;  
soon church would start.  
The clock swung round to half past eight--  
the folks were late.  
No organist was there to play,  
no preacher to pray;  
no choir stirred the air with song--  
what could be wrong?  
Twelve worn-out candles stood unlit  
(this wasn't fit),  
and Bibles, hymnals, all were closed  
in silent rows.  
A full half-hour he waited there,  
then said a prayer.  
He prayed that God would gird his heart  
to do his part  
and asked forgiveness for us all--  
then felt his call.  
He took his Bible from his pew,  
for now he knew  
the only Christian left was he;  
he held God's key.  
His work now would be hard and long,  
but he'd be strong.  
He prayed that Christ would live again  
in hearts of men,  
then opened wide the large front door  
and stayed no more.  
He stepped outside without remorse;  
he knew his course.  
The door through which crowds once had flocked  
he left unlocked.  
Then, "Wait!" he spoke out with a start,  
"I'm not so smart."  
Today, to his profound dismay,  
was Saturday.

## **The Other Door**

To take a perfect bolt  
and start the nut awry  
and twist it with a jolt  
is like a lie.

To grab a kiss or touch  
without her matching mood  
won't gratify as much  
as tasteless food.

To batter down a door  
whose fault is being locked  
won't satisfy us more  
than having knocked.

For every door locked tight  
a second unlocked door  
will open with no fight  
and please us more.

The one who knocks and waits,  
then seeks an unlocked way,  
transcends life's petty hates  
and learns to pray.

## **Our First Warm Day**

If I were to write about our first warm day of spring,

I would write about the stuttering  
burglar-alarm honks of a car  
two blocks away.

I would write about our waving neighbor  
who slowly rides his motorcycle  
out into the breeze, seeming to think  
nothing of his vulnerability.

I would write about the silent force  
that brings the daffodils to bloom  
and emboldens secret romances.

I would write about children loudly vying  
for token goals and supremacies  
in outdoor made-up games.

I would write about the lush air  
playing inside my chest in C-major.

I would write about Celestial Light  
beaming upon all and within all  
while taken for granted by most.

I would watch the setting sun,

listen to the dusk birds,

watch for the first star,

pray my drop into the Beneficent Stream  
that flows within every person's heart  
and every star's,

then drop into the heights  
to write without a pen  
upon the folds of Infinity's Cloak  
about our first warm day of spring.

## **Out of the Black Smoke**

**(First two lines  
paraphrased from  
*The Voice of the Silence*  
by H. P. Blavatsky)**

Out of the black smoke  
winged flames arise.  
The furnace of living  
refines as it destroys.

Black smoke  
billows up just now  
for a coming purity.  
The Refiner observes  
our age-long process  
of combustive growth,  
and patiently awaits.

Black smoke  
of doubt and trial,  
error and despair,  
dissolves by degrees  
into a clarity  
and a loving  
within any and all  
who persevere.

Let our hearts flame up  
out of the black smoke,  
arise beyond pain  
until pure enough to  
fly to the rim of bliss  
and cross into it.

## **Outwhere**

A rocket breaking free  
from Earth's gravity is,  
by dint of direction,  
traveling a trajectory  
into outwhere.

No limit is seen  
to what is outer,  
but what is inner  
offers with its  
infinity a rainbow  
and a promise.

Let rocket people  
point their probing  
within if they would  
make discoveries.

Far-going rockets  
may be today's  
Tower of Babel  
reaching out and up  
to an imagined  
material heaven while,  
nearer than our nuclei,  
heaven is hugging us.

## **Overflow**

Sometimes I'm so full of good feeling  
that I can't do any reading.  
Nothing comes upstream.

If you are full of good feeling now,  
throw this poem away.  
It's a waste of time.

Write me one.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Pain and Promise**

If only it  
How can I  
When will this  
Can I ever  
Is there any  
Why am I  
This is too

Better is later  
This shall pass  
Now to learn  
We are loved  
Never all alone  
Be in being  
Endure in light

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Parting Words

I soon must leave this earth.  
What would you ask  
of me, young man?

*How shall I live my own life,  
oh dying man?*

Live so that you energize  
each day. Give some small gift  
to humanity every day.  
Love the child within you  
every day.

*What is your way  
of finding truth,  
oh dying man?*

Truth is seen, not found.  
You may see truth in the center  
of your head as pictures  
on a screen.  
Truth is not the pictures,  
but truth is in the seeing.  
Be wary of  
memory pictures,  
for they fade and distort.  
And observe the impermanence  
of hopes and fears,  
which rise and fall  
like waves on an inner sea.  
To see truth,  
just look--now,  
now,  
now.

*What should I know  
about love,  
oh dying man?*

Love, as a word,  
has been to the heights  
and the depths,  
so trouble yourself little  
over knowing the word.  
If you know the beauty  
of a blooming daffodil,  
the magic in a young  
woman's gaze, the thrill  
of seeing your first child,  
then you know love.



If you give a gift to someone,  
then you love--  
not the gift  
you buy at a store  
and wrap,  
but a living gift of sharing,  
of nurturing  
when most needed.

*May God bless you,  
oh dying man.*

I now must depart,  
but I shall see you again  
through other eyes.

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Passing and Pausing**

Do you think this lived-in "Now"  
could be any more about self?  
Toys and joys, thrills and kills  
all decorate our deadly days.

"Now's" cousin "Then" was mayhem  
aptly captured between bookends,  
whereas "Will be" rides veiled on high  
like cirrus clouds above the moon.

With the past a mess for certain  
and the present a certain mess,  
our trust must be in the future  
beginning no later than here.

Passing, pausing through life and life,  
caught up in matter's unloveliness,  
we still need to stay and work  
and be, yes be--linked in good heart  
as we walk on the road into Light.

Copyright © 2005 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Passing Through**

*I'm only a guest here?*

Everything provided.  
Need a bed?  
Have a bed.  
Need an arm?  
Have two.  
Heart and brain?  
No problem.

*But what to do here?*

Everything provided.  
Businesses,  
forests and farms,  
books and libraries,  
churches, holy words,  
other people to  
do things with.

*But what to be here?*

Though only a guest,  
do rearrange things,  
attract and repel others,  
leave your mark on  
a world full of  
everybody's marks.

*Thank you.  
I won't stay long.*

## **Path**

One mountain to climb  
One abyss to pass over  
One crow cawing law

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Paths

Found in May 2012 when cleaning  
out my old wallet from 1986

Each path leads to another path  
And that one to a third,  
And on and on path leads to path  
Until the way seems blurred.

The beauty of *this* path lies in  
Its trodden permanence--  
It beckons us to wear it thin  
While traveling whence to hence.

This path winds gently left and right  
As if ignoring straight--  
Perhaps its founder had no sight  
Or trod it very late.

Or did he follow waves of sound  
That most folks fail to hear,  
Which led him up and down and round  
As far-off goals came near?

How paths begin we'll never know  
(The woods will never say),  
But all who have a place to go  
Are thankful for The Way.

Copyright © 1986 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Penetration**

Pierce with pointed mind through veils of falsity  
Toward evanescent Truth.

Smile through hard frowns  
Toward patient Joy.

Pray through frozen images  
Toward warm Oneness.

Love through burning hatreds  
Toward brilliant cool Light.

When Light floods the heart,  
No veil can block,  
No frown can discourage,  
No image can conceal,  
No hatred can destroy.

The proper moment is now.  
The proper place is here.  
The proper act is giving.  
The proper feeling is love.

## **Permissions**

From whom does your life  
have its license to live?  
Not from Rome or Scriptures  
or fine-robed Interpreters--

not from parent or teacher,  
policeman or mayor.  
Your frame can be governed  
but your heart heeds the One

as butterflies do  
aloft in a breeze  
over leaf and flower  
in tune with The Will.

Enclosed please find  
within you a church  
never built, yet nearer  
than one breath away.

## **Philosophy**

I saw a philosopher  
driving to work  
at the college  
in his Pontiac  
Sunbird  
to pick up  
his biweekly  
paycheck,  
and I said  
to myself,  
"What does  
this really  
mean?"

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



# ***Pieces of Mind***

**by Alan Harris  
1994**

**Thanks are extended to the Burlington Northern Railroad  
for providing the commuting time necessary for this project.**

Many who will sit inert before a TV all day will also honk in slow traffic.



Leaving a few stones unturned in a marriage or a minefield can be downright healthy.



Something about righteous people strikes one as wrongeous.



If every discarded corporate goal in America could be changed into a muffin,  
world hunger might be ended.



Give a man a fish  
and feed him for a day;  
teach a man to fish  
and he casts his life away.



Ye armies, take up golf.



God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.  
Later, IBM said, "Let the chips fall where they may,"  
and chaos was upon the earth.



He traveled the world, carrying vast unexplored territories within.



Thrice passed along and truth goes wrong.



### **Plenty from Nothing**

So many good deeds,  
costing no one a dime,  
are done by the people  
who have the least time.



A society lady's best snub is no match for that of a summoned house cat.



Nobody scolds like a coward.



"I don't mind dying," the old-timer mused, "but I'm sure going to miss myself."



### **Epitaph**

**(as wished by Keith E. Harris)**

Some of my advice was good, some poor.  
Some was followed, some ignored.  
May it be that the good advice was followed  
and the poor advice was ignored.



### **Delayed Honor**

Advanced degrees  
(a waste of time?)  
require a climb  
on servile knees.  
Who dare displease  
and do the contrary  
get all the honorary  
Ph.D.'s.



Silence is golden, like wedding rings only much scarcer.



When I'm very ill, no fat ladies may sing at my bedside.



The first robin of spring has to eat frozen entrées.



Whoever first said "Hey, man!" was to be the most widely quoted dude in modern times.



A stitch in time saves the theory of relativity.



Too many looks spoil the betrothal.



### **Pep Talk to Shy Poets**

Will editors request the poems  
you've written for your drawer?  
As well make friends by holing up  
behind an armored door.



### **Law of Halves**

Reprimands  
where none are needed  
make every new one  
half as heeded.



### **People You May Know**

#### **Execudrudge**

Follows paralytic procedures to the nth degree.

#### **Maitre d'isdain**

Helps you feel humble in a restaurant where you don't really belong.

#### **Hairbabbler**

Gets gossip all over your new do.

#### **Cellular phony**

Attracts dates by flashing his pocket phone.

#### **Stockbroken**

Working on his third improved system.

**Standup Graffitiian**

Writes high comedy in the stalls.

**Hell's Angler**

Rides a Harley to the trout stream.

**Altered Boy**

Piously trades puberty for the soprano section.

**Baba Bigaura**

A perfected being who has to take on disciples to keep from starving.



Music is evidence that beauty, mathematics, and time all live in the same neighborhood.



Stumbling blocks make wonderful starting blocks for the next race.



Happiness may come in waves separated by generous troughs.



Jesus had quite an impact for one who apparently knew no algebra.



When you're down in the dumps, advice becomes excruciatingly abundant.



A kiss in time makes nine.



When a salesman says my name repeatedly, he is pushing a button--the eject button.



Getting your hair clipped tends to make your secrets fall out of your mouth.



### **Junk Class Mail**

A proposed new category for most US Mail,  
which would be conveyed from the Post Office directly into a  
nearby recycling truck, offering Americans an environmentally  
correct savings of millions of domestic hours.



Perhaps 90% of us have been talked into doing 90% of what we have done.



### **Corporate Image Task Force Report**

Our research shows that the best way to make our customers think  
they are getting what they ask for is to give them what they ask for.



Half of humanity have ego problems, while the other half are proud not to have any.



### **No Hog Heaven?**

Might not the same bliss  
as the guru's Nirvana  
be experienced by pigs  
in a rotten banana?



The road to hell is littered with the manuscripts  
of church sermons written late on Saturday.



To marry for happiness may end up stretching both words a little.



### **Businessman's Prayer**

God grant me the ingenuity  
to escape the things I cannot change,  
money to change the things I can,  
and lawyers to know the difference.



Random silences deepen a conversation and add force to an argument.



### **Unanimously Remorseful**

Personnel in a meeting  
to agreements may come,  
which in each of their hearts  
they know to be dumb.



### **Good Morning Wish**

May your breakfast food nourish,  
your day ahead flourish,  
and your outlook on living  
be never too worryish.



### **Well-Balanced Man**

He's just as shallow as he is loud,  
as incompetent as he is arrogant,  
and as insecure as he is cocksure.



**Lecture:** a verbal dance between voice and attention,  
sometimes accompanied by meaning.



Never lose more money than you can afford to lend.



### **Exposed**

In life no law's known  
to prevent hurtful words,  
as in death one's gravestone  
is wide open to birds.



He has a six-figure handshake.



To nurse a few grudges is forgivable if you try not to breast-feed them.



### **The Kindest Safe**



Thieves will fail,  
try as they may,  
to steal any money  
you've given away.



**Comfort:** what philosophers deride in order to somewhat achieve.



Computers have enabled business offices to move much more quickly from one  
emergency to the next.



Perhaps the only infallible way to detect a lie is to be the liar.



### **Country Song Title**

*You Punched a Hole in My Heart Like I Was A Train Ticket to Peoria*



Didn't we think we were bad when we used to do a drive-by tooting?



The wealthy appreciate humility in others, and some even pretend to it themselves.



No bird flies freer than a skating child.



## **Computer Book Title**

*Artificial Intelligence for Dummies*



A computer is a city in a box.



Find some friends you like, or be stuck with the friends who find you.

---

## **In Case of Offense**

The feather of humor  
may sometimes  
be felt as a dagger thrust.  
Humblest apologies to  
any wounded reader.

--A. H., April, 1994

## **Planting an Apple Tree**

Our green earth is turning brown  
like a skinless apple  
when wrapped in clear plastic.  
We cough and spit our technology  
into its atmosphere,  
pumping it full of our pumpings,  
heating it with our heatings.

We fail to hear earth wheeze  
as we motor to the flea market  
for our next bargain  
or to the supermarket for 2% milk.  
We dump our chemists' ideas  
into the only air there is  
and pump carbon  
into our children's lungs.  
Already we smell our urban halitosis  
blowing back into our faces  
and we make little jokes about it.

Will earthlife fade away  
along with our generation?  
Or will we let it breathe  
the saving breath of trees?  
It is too smoky to tell from here,  
but I plant this apple tree  
in case earth heals one day  
and some new Newton needs  
a lump on the head.

## **Plowhorse**

My horse and I are brothers,  
and the morning sun knows why.

Within my horse resides  
a soul, I'm pretty sure--  
more wisdom than just to strain  
and turn brown fields to black.

I'd guess this horse was human  
in ages before the Ice,  
but now for some dim reason  
is sentenced to the plow.

Service, a horse's essence,  
had best be, too, my own  
as we pull such plows as matter  
into ages still to come.

My horse and I are brothers  
and the morning sun knows why.

## Poetic License

Bearer is  
guaranteed  
the freedom  
to write anything at  
all  
or nothing at all,  
in any form or no  
form,  
in any color,  
at any angle,  
on any subject  
or no subject,  
using words  
real or coined.

Bearer must endure  
all consequences  
of said writing,  
for this is how it is.

## Poetry Poem

Awfully many poems these days  
seem chains of syntactical screams  
with metaphors careening on two wheels  
and coy diction that raises its hand  
and says "I said that!"

Some poems are easily read like  
the smile of a friend you are visiting  
who sits you down on a clean couch  
with a peanut butter cookie and  
makes you feel warm inside  
with talk and apple cider.

Darker poems  
can insinuate  
somewhere below  
your belt with  
startling obscurity  
or grab greasily  
at your possibilities.

Kinds and kinds of poems  
spring to being  
like sparks from a grindstone  
that sharpens inner tools.

Poets tell lies that are  
deeper than truth,  
and refuse to quit writing  
all over the world's wall.

How is a poem written?  
Find one inside  
and watch.

## **Prayer for 2000**

Undecimated by a new thousand (flow flows on),  
abruptly we in 2000 seem to be where  
we've always been (and busily been),  
still wishing for a wish (still praying for a prayer)  
to make our earthlife right (or righter).

Were we to dip silently (each) into a minute (untimed),  
we could scarcely come up unwashed (unchanged)  
by (I falter at "Your" for dualism) some  
transcendent gentle rightness (grace)  
guiding our souls like boats (adrift in when)  
into a nowness found just below now.

I would pray (if I prayed, and I do)  
from within most central us (where one is allish)  
for easings where we grasp (egolike)  
and gentlings where we (too quickly) scold.

Feeling safe and strong in softest You,  
inexplicable Lord most high (most deep),  
with Light never seen (Force never unfelt),  
I pray and pray (and somehow always pray).

## **Prayer in Brief**

I bow  
with heart in hand  
to offer up my life  
for larger Life, for brighter Light,  
for Joy.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **Prayer of Being**

Oh Nameless One,  
if I, as I, am not  
meant to be,  
then how could I  
sit here writing  
a prayer of thanks  
for my being and  
for the far reach  
I am from dust?

My prayer only asks  
that, to the sea of  
goodness that I feel  
all around me, I might  
be allowed to add  
my anonymous drop.

Today you overwhelm  
my most lovingness  
by how strangely deep  
you go into, through,  
and around me.

Waitingly, doingly,  
goingly, searchingly,  
my heart offers back  
to its Source a hum that  
sounds as much like a  
Bach Prelude as an OM.

Amen

## **Prayer of Unknowing**

O Lord, I don't know  
what "O" and "Lord" mean,  
nor do I know what words  
to silently say  
into your holy ear  
(if any ear at all is hearing),  
nor do I seem to receive replies,

and yet I feel in my deeper  
inside places (which have no places)  
that, as I'm fumbling for words  
and stumbling within my soul,  
a prayer is somehow praying me  
and giving amen to my life.  
Uncomprehending, Lord,  
I drop my words.  
Amen.

## **Preparing the Colors**

Blend faith with impossible  
for an enlightened off-white.

A yesbeam can brighten doubt  
when droll is mixed lightly in.

Ego turns a palette all black--  
speckle this with stars of give.

Gold turns gold into more gold  
leaving little breath for seeing.

Painting a ceiling invisible  
makes the room rollick with sky.

Where find invisible paint?  
Be liberal with stars of give.

## **Pressure**

In a house where Usually prevails,  
where Always-used-to guides,  
where What-other-people-think  
and Never-been-done-before deter,

a cork may pop one day up  
out of a pressurized bottle  
to let wine spray the ceiling  
just  
in case novelty might be okay.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Procession**

Metaphysical  
stairway to inner summits:  
reincarnation

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **The Prophet**

Our city's wild-haired prophet  
Stumbled through the gutter  
Of our subtle street  
Crying:

God is being killed,  
Murdered by a stoneman's hand-ax.  
Giddy chaos overwhelms his brain;  
Head-blood gushes down his face,  
Gurgles in his throat.  
He tears his chest  
With dying fingernails.  
I see him falling to the nadir  
of neurotic nothingness.  
God is dead;  
Mourn, man.

Our prophet staggered on  
With timely steps until  
His voice was out of range  
Again.

## **Purchase**

Tried to buy the Sun  
paying installments each day  
until it owned me.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Questions for Making a Decision**

1. What is my primary motive as I make this decision?
2. Will my decision cause benefits beyond myself and promote a wider good?
3. Will my course of action unnecessarily diminish or hurt any person or group?
4. Will the consequences of my decision be long-term or temporary?
5. Will I be turning over control of my life to another person or agency?
6. Will I be able to have the necessities of life?
7. What sacrifices will I need to make, and what benefits outweigh these sacrifices?
8. Whose strong influence am I feeling upon my decision, and shall I allow that?
9. What is the worst result my decision can bring, and can I accept that?
10. What safety net will I have if nothing goes as planned?
11. Will high risk be offset by potential growth and deepening?
12. When am I going to stop thinking about this decision and do something?



## Quiet

When every somewhere  
falls away and all  
nowheres turn into  
the main everywhere--  
where is there then  
to go but quiet  
into here?

When love turns  
to sand without  
any other in view  
and nobody cares  
except groanings  
of self--  
might quiet  
no thinking  
deep breathing be  
salve enough  
to allow tomorrow?

When demands on  
time money time love  
time patience time  
agonize the brain  
choke all muscles  
as deadlines approach  
like freight trains  
honk-honking beware  
of broken futures  
at whatever is you--  
does a chair  
still exist in  
a quiet room  
for a fortunate  
sitting--  
does air  
still surround  
for a breathing--  
does the quiet  
beneath all crash  
of all brain  
embrace you  
for as long  
for as long  
for as long?

## **Railing West**

Out through my train's  
dirty window I see  
the clear yellow sun  
sliding its way  
down into stardom.

A sudden stand  
of trees whisking by  
allows water to gleam up  
from between their trunks,  
still as the reflected sky.

Suburban homes  
too new for trees  
swiftly turn  
like fashion models  
on a stage.

Dusk is now underway  
with this ambivalent sky,  
neither gray nor blue,  
tempting my train  
westward into nightfall.

Sinking like an  
orange lollipop,  
the sun is being  
licked away fast  
from underneath  
by tomorrow.

I have lived long enough  
to have respect for tomorrow.

I have one sun only,  
and only one tomorrow.  
I wait and wait  
for tomorrow until  
it's all I am.

## Random Thoughts

A human is a handshake between spirit and matter.



If faith can move mountains, just imagine what knowledge can do.



A magnet can convert a piece of steel into another magnet,  
but what made the magnet a magnet?



If we could just trust the universe to know what it is doing,  
we would have more joy and less fear.



Money is the essence of matter; it never leaves the earth.



The universe is a great magnet teaching us little pins to act like it.



A loving thought is as deep as the night sky.



The "Great Books of the Western World" are like newspapers next to the Book of Life.



When wealth speaks, greed listens.



Computers can be mirrors in which we admire our minds and forget our souls.



We crawl through life like caterpillars, fearing the final cocoon that alone leads  
to freedom and glory.

## Reality

Down, down a humming spiral I float  
to an undark land that lies about me among unshadows.  
I reach out a hand that I don't have, to grope, to touch,  
and I feel nothing but soft everything.

Without ears I hear the soft multi-mumblehum  
of a misty shore stretching into windless, waveless, waterless distance  
where the surf pounds once every eon in a grand, spray-filled creation  
within whose star-foam we humanly manifest.

Here I feel the peaceful pulse of Most Inner Underatom  
beaming benevolence up through the tree that is we  
and feeding our Adam-atoms a feast  
of electric apples that never touch the ground.

I see every-you around me and in me.  
Here is where you-I find sustenance beyond all paychecks.  
Notice this gentle light from no visible sun.  
Look at that tiny root leading upwards to a budding planet.

Rising up the humming spiral again, I hear little taps  
of what most people call reality.  
It is raining on the roof  
and the cat needs to be fed.

## **Recourse**

All roads out are blocked  
by this rockslide in your mind?  
All roads in await.

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Release from the Known

Where did we meet?  
Where before have I seen  
your steadfast resilience?  
In the snow on a mountain?  
Have I seen your eyes  
in churning blues of seawater?  
Has your voice laughed  
in the rain on some porch roof?  
My knowing fails.

Being with you  
is so far beyond and above  
knowing  
that I gasp at the depth,  
as if I were to emerge  
out of a challenging forest  
and stand surprised  
at the brink  
of some Grand Canyon,  
the fragrance of familiar evergreens  
pouring over the edge  
into this optical impossibility.

In school we learned hard and long,  
hoping to know our way into a future,  
but now an approaching endlessness  
is vaporizing  
every drop of knowing  
we ever gleaned  
and sweeping us away  
in the singing wind.

However unknowing,  
we can do,  
we can feel,  
we can think,  
we can be,  
and we can  
(most yes of all)  
love.

A being is fullest of can  
when emptiest of know.  
Witness the majestic power of weather  
around our deeply unknowing globe,  
or feel within all your organs  
the fathomless tides fluctuating  
under lunar and solar urgings.

Breathe, breathe with me,  
my sweet companion,  
as we sally confidently  
into a smiling unknown.

## Relief in Relife

Does evening raise a fear of no more dawns?  
Does autumn's chill forever kill our lawns?  
If not, then why dread gray hair in a mirror?  
If dawns and lawns recur, is death to fear?

Is body all I am, a soft robot  
conditioned by blind chance, then left to rot?  
Is heaven just a slide shone on the sky  
to keep believers honest till they die?

To think extinction ends our too-short life--  
to think a void replaces child and wife--  
to think a shroud blanks out all consciousness--  
all far too grim for me, I must confess.

I'm reassured from deep in bone and heart  
that when I and my body come to part,  
I'll slip it off and leave it like a coat,  
retaining what I know, but free to float.

Our breath comes in, goes out, and so do we  
who end each earthly life, but then are free  
to roam bright inner realms with opened eyes  
which see through physicality's bleak lies.

We thrive in heaven's symphony of mind  
uncounted blissful years, until we find  
we thirst again to join the physical  
where atoms quickly teach what's practical.

Like gravity, a pull of destiny  
reels in our soul from near infinity  
and helps us choose as home some mother's womb--  
what most call birth, our trammeled soul deems tomb.

Then choice and aftermath on earth are learned--  
like school, where each promotion must be earned.  
With open-hearted deeds we all progress;  
with selfish acts we duly retrogress.

If death is no more end than western sun--  
if Soul appears through bodies, one by one--  
then life is no more opposite of death  
than breathing is the opposite of breath.

## Remembrance

Remembering tells me  
I was never not, nor  
were you nor anyone.

Arteries in the Cosmos  
are pulsing with light  
and life and love

in a flow never ceasing  
yet constantly changing  
in form and expression.

Peace it is to remember  
these arteries that feed  
from out of the Unseen,

their pulsings uncountable,  
their inner motions subtler  
than any evening breeze.

Remembering upward  
and inward, how not feel  
vitality from the One?

I remember (don't you?)  
the beauty within trust,  
the safety of community,

the triumph of cooperation,  
the brave sureness of joy,  
love as easy to find as air.

Remembering as I do  
and perhaps as you do,  
how could one not return?



## **Restaurant Miff**

An old couple,  
both over 80,  
look at menus.  
He mumbles.

She scolds, "Oh,  
you're always  
disappointed."

Argument now....

An argument  
60 years bitter--  
stern faces,  
trembling hands.

How many lifetimes  
will they require  
to smile, care, give,  
feel smoother?

Love is nearer  
to them than the  
germ of an instant,  
yet they fight on for  
fleeting rightness.

Old antipathies  
butt their heads,  
bam bam bam,  
straining old hearts  
that do well just  
to find their next  
beat.

## **A Retreat Ahead**

Here's to Blaine and Jean Harker, those lovable two,  
with joy so contagious and counseling so true.  
A mourner in grief is a magnet to Jean,  
since few are the pains she's not suffered or seen.

At the parties they give there is greatness of table,  
and every last diner eats more than he's able.  
Jean's food pantry likewise, for the hungry and poor,  
was much like her heart--a wide open door.

Their lives are committed to lifting the fallen,  
through talkin' and workin' and sweatin' and bawlin'.  
An unspoken concern here is needful of saying--  
for Jean's own self-healing we are fervently praying.

While Blaine may have yet to get milk from a cow,  
in spite of the Amish folks showing him how,  
he's mastered the art of infectious laughter  
that shatters the silence from floor-joist to rafter.

They've moved to the country near Old Shipshewana,  
but they can't quite move in yet, as much as they wanna--  
while waiting for lodgers to kindly dislodge  
they have set up their home in a large upper garage.

We honor the Harkers today, Blaine and Jean,  
and the Power behind them, so strong yet unseen.  
May God bless their home, the retreat of their dreams,  
granting laughter which heals, and the grace which redeems.

## **Ride**

Commuter train bears  
between the wavy irons  
most precious cargo.

Passengers talking,  
sleeping, reading newspapers,  
eighty miles per hour.

Unique life stories  
glowing within these bodies  
filing toward sunset.

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **River Pair**

We spend a few sunlit minutes by the river  
between wafting willows above  
and the sea-bound twinkling current below,  
watching two ducks quack and dive for food.

We have learned to be quiet,  
letting the silent breeze of love  
sway us together in spirit  
like these oscillating cattails near the bank.

Younger, we captured each other swimming  
in a marriageward current of living water,  
not knowing quite who we were  
nor where we were bound.

Older, we have danced a lively jig,  
stubbed a toe, raised a child,  
blindly hurt each other,  
healed each other's wounds.

As we sit here and mirror the present  
to each other in quaint communion,  
gazing at two ducks gliding downstream,  
there is nothing at all to say or do.

## **Rolling with the Thunder**

Why I was angry matters not,  
but fury had blossomed in me,  
and I *was* it--no turning away.

Fingers atremble,  
voice ashake,  
heart apump,  
I challenged a present wrong  
yielded up to me  
from some chasm of an obscure past.  
I stood resiliently firm,  
arteries turgid with love and law.

It is over, and I did not lose.  
No one lost--or won.  
The conflict was as imperative  
and brief  
as a summer thunderstorm.

I sit now electric with leftover adrenaline,  
images of the struggle  
reverberating in my thoughts--  
but already a silence in my blood begins  
to bathe me with merciful forgetting.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Rose Cross

I survey this rose,  
seeing into its center,  
in and in  
to a divinity fed by rainwater  
and sparkled by sunfire.

Never was this rose  
merely a pretty flower.  
It blooms big in the center  
of the Cosmic Cross,  
bathed in blood-red tones.

The center of the Cross  
and the center of the Rose,  
conjoining,  
reveal and conceal  
the Crux of Creation.

Was there in our universe  
a big bang  
with no one  
in the forest to hear it?  
Were there thorns  
before there was a rose?  
A cross before there were saviors?

Look into the center of this rose,  
dizzily down into  
the center of your head,  
for the source of the big bang.

Search into the cross's crux;  
drill into the core  
of your own hurting heart  
to find a blazing forth  
of eternity's splendid light.

Now take this rose,  
this cross.  
Hold them dear until  
the next big bang,  
which no one will hear  
either.

We will know each other  
then as now,  
for we will say a secret word,  
which is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Remember?

## **Roses**

If only one rose  
ever in history  
were seen to bloom,  
what awe might be!

Now people yawn  
at roses by dozens,  
pretty weeds to eyes  
that won't see.

If we but knew  
we're each a rose  
asleep in a bud,  
might bloom we?

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Safe

I have floated like a maple leaf  
to the sky below an autumn pond,  
to an inner place of rich relief  
from gusty winds now slipped beyond.

I sense eternal love from high  
(or is it deep?) inside my being,  
and find this view before my eye  
requires a lighter, wider seeing.

Odd now, the fear those final sighs  
would turn out all my lights within,  
when light now brings these newer eyes  
envisionings of friends and kin.

Since here I live within a force  
that moves me anywhere I ask it,  
let no one feel the least remorse  
upon the closing of my casket.

Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)





## Sanctuary Cove

Tucson, Arizona

Here is a chapel  
simple enough  
to welcome all creeds,  
all vegetation,  
all birds,  
all humans.

People of vision built it up  
out of stone to serve souls  
upon this quiet foothill  
near Safford Peak.

Visitors come for prayer  
or meditation or escape  
or inner alignment  
and enter into its peace.

Not a myth, this place--  
mortared local stone,  
cactus needles fully sharp,  
red earth of ancient lava.

When outer living has led  
to a thirst for contemplation,  
a path leads you to the door.

Walk in. Adjust your eyes.  
Choose a bench for sitting.  
Beliefs fade into Silence  
opening into Mystery  
as doves out on the roof  
are cooing a knowing  
that you lost long ago.

## **Santa's Interior Monologue**

Boy, it's dark.  
Sure is cold.  
Housetop--whoa, boys!  
Got the bag.  
Suck it in.  
Down the chimney.  
There's the tree.  
Gifts out of bag.  
Stockings are here.  
Stuff 'em.  
Eat the cookies.  
Drink the milk.  
Wink.  
Suck it in.  
Up the chimney.  
Ready, boys--away!  
Sure is cold.  
Boy, it's dark.

(Repeat a billion times.)

## Saturday Walk

I am nothing. I walk my  
fleshy shell along the street,  
seeing the squirrels at play and  
hearing the early spring birds.

No, I am not invisible yet.  
This body has size and mass  
and cruises well on automatic pilot.  
Any bird that cares can see me.

But the breeze whistles in my ears  
as if I were hollow, and that's how  
I feel--ecstatically hollow--  
here for now, but empty of place.

I **am** the neighborhood today--  
I am the sidewalk, the bare but  
budding trees. I am the children  
on bicycles and skateboards.

No iota in me stops  
or diverts the fresh flowing of life.  
The sun shines straight through me,  
and I like the cool feeling inside.

Monday in the office  
I will be something again.  
I will have a title and a salary  
and a desk and a boss.

Mondays must perhaps be.  
Deadlines, crises,  
meetings, phone calls--  
all these may have their place.

But walking now outdoors,  
I drift along free and empty.  
Nothing can touch me  
when I am nothing.

## **The Scrooge before Christmas**

Yes, there is a Scrooge. He haunts the hearts of those who wish that Santa's \$10.00 white beard were real--who wish that his "Ho, ho, ho" meant more than the \$6.00 an hour he is paid to utter it. Scrooge-inhabited people desperately long for a "Ho, ho, ho" from deep within a genuine person's heart.

We seem to want people, all people, to be genuine, yet most people have personality owies that deflect them away from thoroughly genuine behavior. Christmas would ideally be a time when all of those owies would get better, but through some quirk of human nature, they usually get worse. The showy get showier, the stingy get stingier, the drinking get drunker, the overeating get overweight, and the busy get busier.

Considering the above, "Christmas" would seem a mockery when we consider that two-thirds of the word is "Christ". Perhaps those of Scroogish persuasion would prefer to spell it "Christmess".

Scroogish people are not the only ones who clamor for change. Certain religious types are annually haranguing each other about the True Meaning of Christmas. These frustrated (and sometimes ultraholy) people don't usually identify at all with Scrooge, but they, too, hate the tinsel, the tawdriness, and (other people's) hypocrisy. They want everyone to concentrate on the Christ child, the angels, the star, and other symbols which provided comfortable myths and icons to live by during their childhood. They tend to cling to these warm, fuzzy concepts the more tightly as they find themselves struggling with the bottomless mysteries of relationships, emotions, illnesses, and the Big Unmentionable. These bewildered adults cry out for something more stable, something safer, something holier, and something that makes sense when life doesn't.

Scroogeness could be defined as a thin layer of rage masking a desperate search for sincerity beneath. The Scrooge in our hearts knows the difference between the Jesus and the junk. Scrooge is the skeptic who dares to call tinsel tinsel, the seemingly cruel man who eschews sentimentality. Scrooge dares to drill down deeper than the reindeer manure, down into his past hurts and heartaches, down to the deepest gnarled roots that tap into his tortured soul. No, he does not like Christmas, nor does he especially like himself, but in digging deeply, he discovers a little child in there who can scarcely breathe. He sees that the "Bah" in "Bah, humbug" has all along been a crying out for breath and life and truth and goodness. Humbug has been smothering this little child for most of its life.

Long live the Scrooge within us, for deep within this Scrooge is the holy child who began life in a stable full of smelly stuff, and in whose innocent heart shimmers a true light which will dissolve the false lights and shams.

The Christ, then, may be said to inhabit Scrooge and you and me. Even though our whole land be filled with tinsel, Scrooge and you and I may discover that tinsel is an improvement over the smelly stuff in the stable. Through this child's eyes we may even see a light which we might call, for lack of a better word, a star.

## Seed Thoughts

### Part 1: Genesis

Seven soft planets  
bloom on the trellis of space  
like sunlit roses.

Budding daffodil,  
yellow universe in birth,  
flows deeply toward light.

Forest dawn reveals  
acres of acorns dormant  
beneath parent oaks.

Virgin mountain bears  
seven bouquets of roses  
under Father Sky.

Fohat plants a tree  
of apples laden with seeds  
to orchard an earth.

Breeze of Creation  
swirls sparks from sleeping embers;  
monads dance alive.

Seven pearls glisten,  
lucid on a stringless string,  
linking space with space.

### Part 2: Activity

Brooding dove in nest  
warms empty eggs to fullness,  
cooing compassion.

Honeybees from hives,  
inhaling sublime nectar,  
breathe sweet hexagons.

Colony of ants,  
thoughts darting, busy, working--  
mind in miniature.

Moon-struck timber wolves  
howl their mantras mournfully  
from far-off mountains.

Caged lion pacing,  
fretful of the iron bars,  
under silent sun.

Midnight crickets sing  
in synchronous symphony  
to unknown baton.

Spider in moonlight,  
spinning fragile microcosm,  
reflects Reflection.

### **Part 3: Consummation**

Orb of eye twinkling  
with golden glint of grandness--  
spark becoming star.

Pool-reflected Self,  
diffused by breeze-churned ripples,  
returns to deep calm.

Mountaintop vision  
reveals a whispering valley  
where all is in place.

Mind relaxing walls,  
manyness softly merging  
until one dream dreams.

Ark of human souls,  
riding silent in dark waves,  
bound for Pralaya.

Black night sky, speckled  
with blazing bonfires of gods,  
murmurs cosmic OM.

Voice of the Silence,  
throbbing through hushed city night,  
chanting "Peace, peace, peace...."

## seeing you

when I look you  
in the eye I find  
history and mystery  
not to be known  
even as your own eye  
presses me like a white  
daytime moon nudging  
soft against an open sky  
right in front of outer space  
leading to everything else  
that flies and falls including  
any flying-falling maple seed to bring  
an unfoldment of up and down  
(now don't the sprawling-upward limbs  
and thirsty spreading-downward roots  
trace out a delicate explosion so slow  
so sweet that the tree has to yes die  
to go bare  
to fall  
to rot  
to sleep  
to have been all of  
what a tree is  
all of?)  
but how I look at you  
my very alter-life  
is as moon over healthy tree  
at play in sunlight  
in behind your eye  
behind your inner eye  
behind the innerness of your inner eye  
behind even behindness  
all the way back to  
here I am across a table  
from your most amazing being  
wondering if you see  
what journey is behind me  
all the way to here

## **Seeking**

Knock—but look around—  
you are already inside—  
no need for the door.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **Seeking until Found**

There is a footless path,  
a carless road,  
a planeless flight  
to a placeless mountain  
within.

When focused on our outer joys  
we seek after things that weigh or thrill,  
we dignify the use of force,  
we laud coarse lucre with our hopes.  
Seeking without, we remain without.

If we but listen quietly  
for the call to an inner mountain state,  
we find that our souls are known and loved  
by a subtle shepherd grooming us  
to serve and build, to sow and reap.

Knowing our knownness,  
we may find our foundness.

Copyright © 2004 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Sensing a Future**

In this shaky world  
where up and down  
are definitely known  
but gravitation still  
poses big perplexities  
we'd sometimes like  
to shake off atoms  
and take a guided  
tour of the possible  
and if such a ride  
were available for  
a dollar or a million  
we'd buy a ticket  
but since no booth  
sells these tickets  
we continue with  
our work yet vaguely  
sense this ride is  
going to happen  
sometime because  
we see clearings and  
glimpses especially  
when mind and air  
are perfectly quiet  
and love is flowing  
up and down and  
all through our being  
as if red lights were at  
some railroad crossing  
flashing to announce  
an unseen movement  
much grander than  
anything stoppable

## Sentence

Back of our house  
a lovable stray pooch,  
young and off-white  
with random black  
Mendelian punctuation,  
darts about and sniffs grassy clumps  
until, eyeing a soggy tennis ball  
wedged under the neighbor's fence,  
she plucks it up in her teeth  
and prances puppylike for attention  
as if mankind needs to please play ball  
(has she romped with children  
before being dumped out of  
their father's midnight-slinking car?),  
seeming ignorant or heedless  
that ball is not played  
where she is going to go--  
by way of famishing jaunts  
through shrubby neighborhoods,  
altercations with kept cats  
and with collared mutts,  
a trusting ride  
in the dogcatcher's van,  
and a meager feast or two  
before the period  
at the end  
of her  
sentence.



## **September Fade**

Sooner sunsets now--  
flowers have gone part-petaled--  
white of hair, I mull.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Sharing Copedom**

How do you cope with nopes, with fallen hopes,  
with must-haves that go poof in the night?  
Do you glum out and turn numb?  
I do, for a while. Join me.

How can you know what you don't know?  
You need answers, but all you hear is  
the inside of your head. Do you worry?  
I do, for a while. Join me.

Is happiness just beyond the next locked gate,  
and no one around with key or hammer?  
Do you fantasize with fruitless wishing?  
I do, for a while. Join me.

When trouble somehow dissolves from notice  
and leaves you breathing free again,  
do you smile a breath of thank you into the One?  
I do, for a while. Join me.

## Shopping Cheap

Empty-feeling in this full-discount store,  
I notice others trancing by, glaze-eyed,  
behind their clinking lop-wheeled carts.  
Lured, are they, by the hook of free?  
Hypnotized by the hype of cheap?  
I wander hapless and mapless  
through thingful, clerkless aisles  
and chafe inside at where things aren't.

PA speakers storewide  
announce who-cares specials,  
demand urgent price checks,  
summon somebodies to the front, then  
resume happy snippets of syrupy sambas.

Ah! A rare tagged *homo employus*--  
I'll catch him and be out of here.  
"Where are the reading glasses?" I ask  
his back before he can escape.

He gives robotic directions to Aisle 5,  
cinched with a "Can't miss 'em."

Remember when store clerks  
would ask if they could help you,  
and lead you to your product,  
then stick around to make sure  
it was really what you needed?

Remember customers? Service?

Within this barn of bargains  
harried service-counter girls refund  
to waiting lines for slipshod quality,  
murmuring memorized apologies  
to jaded ears, then "Step up, please."

Remember quality? Cordiality?

Absent is any quality counter  
to make up for poor service  
at the service counter.

Employees hired here  
for ho-hum per hour  
evade frazzled shoppers who,  
from all different wealths,  
squander the numbered  
heartbeats of their lives  
to search for bargains  
planted cleverly near  
high-margin impulse racks.

Remember joy? Hilarity?

Blindly, the free market (an  
oxymoron to the credit-card poor)  
ratchets money up to our  
finely-computered investors  
who downwardly squeeze  
more work for equal pay  
out of fewer desperates who  
hate the jobs they have  
which earn the scratch they need  
to take out bigger loans.

Remember philanthropy? Altruism?

No reading glasses found in Aisle 5.  
Did miss 'em.

Aimless now in Aisle 7,  
I stop my cart to ask within:  
How might people market goods  
with love instead of greed?  
Is selfishness the ultimate?

As if an angel had the mike,  
the PA system broadcasts  
"Follow the blue light...",  
crackles, and goes silent.

Copyright © 1999 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Short & Sour

An ounce of silence is worth a pound full of dogs.

For later flowers, if we but endure,  
Misfortune makes a good manure.

He seemed warm and open, sort of like an armpit.

### **Thanksgiving Blessing**

Thank you, Lord, for what we've got.  
The turkey's dead and we are not.

Loudest laughter may snarl after.

To retain his professorship, he published a cemetery of dead ideas with footnotes for headstones.

**Infatuation:** love so intense, beautiful, and brief as to be unachievable by the secure.

If thine eye offend thee, pluck out the plug on thy TV.

### **Quack?**

A New Age healer  
may improve on your luck,  
but listen well  
to your inner duck.

A sperm can find an egg quicker than you can find your slippers.

She sued the mirror for visual abuse, and a lenient judge upheld it.

### **Exec**

His expensive suit, his teeth so flossy,  
His wrong decisions at his desk so glossy,  
His colorful charts less gainy than lossy--  
Could it be that he is a lousy bossy?

**Base:** what businessmen are always touching and covering.

**Dysfunctional family:** a discontented container containing the uncontainable.

**Mountain:** a failure of air to occupy a high altitude.

**Calendar:** a device for scheduling the unpredictable.

**Television:** square thing in the corner that sucks in brains and spits out giggles.

Every Christmas the uninformed buy the unnecessary for the ungrateful.

The spouse who loved the caterpillar may hate the butterfly.



There's something about food that rubs off in you.

Behind his smile, agendas.

**Infra-babble:** what meditators hear sometimes, deep inside.

Higher education trains the mind to feel good later by making it feel terrible now.

Overachievers start out restless with a heart of worms, and may end up friendless with a heart of snakes.

**What If?**

What if scant truth be known,  
And no disciples knew this?  
Their gurus they'd enthrone,  
Who'd smile and let them do this.

Copyright © 1994 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Silent Exchange

Settling down to meditate  
in my book-lined alcove,  
I gaze at Buddha on the shelf,  
sitting palms up, cross-legged, calm.  
What is he? Where is his mind?

Deep oceans roll between us,  
the Buddha and me,  
even though his cast iron likeness  
is solidly planted before my eyes  
among amethysts and books.

His sloping shoulders and benign face  
reveal a radiant humility  
surely possible to humanity,  
yet seldom found in bodily beings.

Where is your mind, Lord Buddha?

Your focus seems a thousand miles within  
as you meditate here  
in silent serenity.

May I somehow join your journey?  
What must I do to walk your path?

A sunbeam shines now  
through the nearby window  
and rests on Buddha's heart.

"Look within," he whispers innerly.

"Look within for a pattern of being  
that will respond to your aspirations.  
Consciousness is supple and supportive  
if you discover and respect its laws.

"Bliss abides in every inch of space,  
and will be found hidden in the obvious.

"Master nature by obeying her perfectly.  
Examine her ways, ask her secrets,  
and use her for the benefit of all.  
Blessings accrue to the workman  
who skillfully unfolds a subtle pattern,  
then shapes from it a living temple to truth.

"You live in the pattern  
and the pattern lives in you,  
as the flower hides a seed  
and the seed hides a flower.

"Proceed now into your peace,  
into your meditation.  
Leave my sunlit statue here  
and turn to your inner light.

"Slip softly into the shining sea  
of possibilities,  
releasing love into life  
as life releases you into love.

"I will be here when you return."

Copyright © 1990 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Siren

A siren in the summer distance  
wails poignantly up and down,  
growing nearer and louder  
before fading away beyond hearing.

Was it a policeman chasing a speeder?  
An old man rushing in an ambulance  
toward his last broken breath?  
A fire brigade hurtling toward heat?

Sitting in a lawn chair by my driveway,  
I offer a moment of silence to the siren  
and to whom it has singled out  
for justice or help or death.

"Who was it?" I ask the evening sky.  
No reply--no sound now  
but a breeze rising in the maple trees  
and a low howling from the neighbor's dog.

Who, indeed, was it? Someone I know?  
My best friend? My relative? My neighbor?  
Will I find the answer  
in tomorrow's newspaper?

The mystery of anonymous tragedy  
grips my soul like a magnet.  
A siren seems to drill a hole in my heart  
to let love flow out to the victim.

In the wailing of a siren I hear  
an anthropomorphic moan of failure,  
a human weakness confronting a greater law  
in tooth-gnashing agony.

Sirens will wail on for humanity of the future.  
Speeders may give up or escape,  
old gasping men may live or die,  
fires may burn or be quenched--

but when a siren splits the air, I turn within  
to nurse a pang within my own heart.  
As with the tolling of John Donne's bell,  
the siren wails for me.

## **Some Kind of Haiku**

Some kind of haiku  
that ignores authorities  
lies here in the grass.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Song of the Sick Minstrel**

The winter night droops down  
Around the scratchy trees,  
Tinkled by an icy breeze,  
Snapping.

Let's stand beside this creaking tree  
And watch the bold eclipse  
Devour the midnight sun  
As if it were a yellow wafer,  
Crisp and cold.

At full eclipse,  
Then shall I love you,  
In snapping cold,  
Beneath a moon-dark tree.

Copyright © 1965 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **A Sonnet to Igor Stravinsky**

Stravinsky's measured steps--halting by A  
cross an autumn-browning field of sound--  
accent his humming of tomorrow's hymn on  
yesterday's three-octave voice of string.  
He ran away from sentimental ground to wA  
r against its farmers on a dim internal B  
attleground, and thence each spring has F  
ound him planting in new five-row fields.

When blackbirds mimic from the field's ri  
m parading red and yellow on each wing (F  
or innovation raises greener yields), he  
styles himself Beelzebub in brown. Acros  
s the breeze Stravinsky halts by--his gro  
und will soak the blood of birds that diE.

Copyright © 1966 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **The Sound of Dying**

If you have heard  
a train go by,  
you know the sound  
of dying.

A buzz, a roar,  
and no more.

Oh, maybe a little clacking  
in the distance,  
but nothing to  
speak of.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



# ***Spared for Seed***

**by Alan Harris  
1988**

**This book is meant for anyone  
who likes his reading brief and fun.  
Some phrase implanted like a seed  
may bear fruit in a time of need.**

The bad news is that you are the slave of your past.  
The good news is that you are the master of your future.



Weak isn't wrong,  
but meek is strong.



A loving thought is deeper than the night sky.



Heaven, earth, and hell are three radio stations playing  
inside you all the time, and your mind automatically tunes  
in the station that resonates most closely with the quality  
of your thoughts.



You can lead a friend to church,  
but you can't make him pray.



Why impose virtue on someone else? Everyone needs to  
decide upon virtuous action from within, either from

deepening insight or from reaction to the painful pressures caused by selfish action.



Love of looks  
is love with hooks.



In brotherhood,  
the group is the good.  
The brother matters  
and never his hood.



Give and live; keep and weep.



When light is shining within, no darkness from without  
can penetrate it.



We pay for our comforts  
while hardships come free,  
but our hardships pay debts  
that we no longer see.



We spend our first forty years making mistakes, and our  
next forty years making more mistakes.



A man who lends  
has many friends,

but he who shares  
has fewer cares.



Rainbows are around us all the time, but it may take a  
very dark cloud to make them appear.



Perhaps God does things *through* us, not *to* us, and only  
when we ignorantly choose to restrict His natural flow  
through our being does it *appear* that God is doing bad  
things to us.



Friends bend where fakes break.



No teacher can give us anything not already inside us. He  
only helps us rearrange random intuitions and thoughts  
into a more orderly pattern.



A man of schools  
can learn God's rules  
and do well as a preacher,  
but daily life,  
with all its strife,  
makes everyone a teacher.



Moderation in all things, including moderation.



Next to the Book of Life, even our "Great Books of the Western World" read like newspapers.



The shallower the brook, the more it babbles.



One wonders whether, if philosophers were banished from the world, life wouldn't go on pretty much as usual.



We cannot really break the laws of the universe, but if we ignore them, they will break us. That's one way we learn them. Another way is to pay close attention to what happens to others when they ignore those laws.



A kindly word soars like a bird.



Millions of inspiring books are not yet on paper. They are still exactly where they need to be.



Ride lightly in the saddle, and don't give the horse rotten oats.



If life gives us a load,  
a great honor's bestowed.  
Life knows, if we don't,  
that we can when we won't.



What we plant, we eat.



If we only have enough presence of mind to reach out,  
someone will put just the right thing into our hand.



An oft-spurned bridesmaid asked her bride  
what marriage hints she could provide.  
The bride quipped, "Better men hate pride,  
and lipsticked frowns are magnified."



Heaven's mansions are prefabbed on earth.



Many go about like fortresses, weighted down by the very  
walls they hope will protect them from others.



Shepherd thyself, else let the flock be.



We each play our instrument in the orchestra of  
humanity. To worry about who's playing first chair is to  
play our own part less well. If the first chair players were  
the only ones playing, the orchestra of humanity would  
sound awfully thin.



Some force, like a magnet  
that cannot be spurned,  
ever brings us those lessons  
which haven't been learned.



An ounce of good will is worth a pound of prevention.



The bread of life,  
however small,  
must be fully eaten,  
crust and all.

To feed on the best  
and leave the rest  
will fatten your tummy  
and burst your vest.



Does battle blood's flow  
make our wounded world grow?



Think late, suffer soon.



To pray for pay  
is to lose the way.



A tear or a fear is a call to us all.



We can look beyond our noses and think beyond our brains.



We're indebted to our difficult acquaintances because they can teach us so much, and since our enemies push us to our limits, they're our best friends.



Where would humanity be without dirty hands?



Fulfill and be fulfilled.



Tell him some truth he didn't know he knew and gain a friend forever.



Magnets change pins; pains change people.



Work, and the world works with you. Shirk, and the world ignores you.



Silence is the purest speech.



He hated all who hate, and became a reformer. What was  
the net gain?



Wouldn't heaven be a terrible clutter if we could take it all  
with us?



Bears hibernate in their caves, people in their prejudices.



Even the best writing is a feeble substitute for action.



Sometimes we get an urge to do some great thing, and  
we'd really do it if someone could just tell us what it is.



If such great people have labored so diligently for so long,  
why is there still so much more to do?



Pity with care. Poverty may have all it wants.



Experience, like a good lecturer, repeats itself patiently to  
emphasize the lessons we most need to learn.





Until we understand silence, we only partially understand words.



Our deepest wound may heal to become our greatest strength.



Give a man what he *really* needs, and he may throw it back in your face.



Voice your choice,  
make your break,  
work your quirk,  
reap your heap.  
Pay your way,  
stash your cash,  
gain your cane,  
sleep your sleep.



Will our educators ever forget units and teach unity?



Our educational system gives the children nice answers long before they care about the questions.



If you want his money,  
just call him "Honey."

To win his esteem,  
share in his dream.



Many folks devote a whole lifetime to the goal of earning  
as much as they spend.



As machines become more like minds, minds seem to  
become more like machines, but we'll be safe until they  
invent a machine that can cry, and mean it.



Sooner or later one's purpose in life comes pushing up  
through his mistakes like a delicate flower blooming in a  
trash heap.



Each human life is like a new symphony heard for the first  
time. It can't be understood or fully appreciated until after  
the final cadence.



Perhaps two universes, like two friends on a street, can  
meet, nod, and pass without either one giving the event  
more than a fleeting thought.



The Law always plays  
in a very fair way:  
flout and we're out,  
obey and we stay.

Results may be quick  
or require some delay,

but justice endures;  
all debts we repay.



What man has done,  
man can do.  
Buddha did it;  
so can you.



In dreams we float  
in a glass-bottom boat  
on the tranquil sea  
of eternity.



Greed is a weed that will harden your garden.



When prophets turn to profits, wisdom turns within.



If every angry thought were a bullet, humanity would be  
in serious trouble.



Faith may move mountains, but did anyone think to ask  
the mountain if it wanted to be moved?



Trying to find the origin of life is like trying to remember  
your own conception.



When wealth speaks, greed listens.



Is the universe a mindless collection of spinning dirt, or does it know what it's doing? That is the question of the ages. If the former, why are we so intelligent? If the latter, why are we so ignorant?



Computers overly admired  
can leave one's life quite uninspired.



Help a friend, a friend to keep;  
help a foe, a heaven to reap.



Occasionally necessity takes its jackhammer to our expectations to make way for what the chief architect really wants.



The man who builds his own throne rules over a desert.



Love and gravitation keep the universe interesting.



The best comeback is silence, for who can argue with that?



A kind act is worth a dozen beliefs.



Life brings situations in which we feel like Jonah or Noah, who were each stuck inside something that moved slowly, smelled bad, and couldn't be steered.



A secret, if whispered carefully, will spread faster than the ten o'clock news.



Your child may later thank an early, prudent spank.



Eternity isn't something we wait for--it's what we breathe.



Sooner or later we get what we want, which would be fine if we only knew how to want correctly.



Duty, though unflattering, is far preferred to chattering.



Kindness finds the cracks in a grumpy person's crust.



Here's a sobering thought: by 4,000 AD these present days may be referred to as the Dark Ages.



Reading too much can leave the mind soft and useless.



Desire can't get you close enough to me,  
but truest love ignores proximity.



When today's scare headlines are discovered 2,000 years from now, the archaeologists will have some hearty laughs. Why not laugh at the headlines now and avoid the delay?



Pain keeps an internal reform school for those who won't accept what is.



When mining in books,  
remember two rules:  
dig where there's gold  
and leave glitter to fools.



Marry money:  
days are sunny,

life is funny,  
sweet as honey.

Markets crash:  
no more cash,  
tempers clash,  
life is trash.

Once we're burned,  
much is learned.  
What's discerned?  
"Bliss is earned."



What seems new  
is deja vu.



When one sits to meditate, the mind may at first sound  
like a jukebox in a cathedral.



The silence in an elevator full of strangers is different  
from that in a forest on a summer evening. The former  
silence screams of crowded separateness, whereas the  
latter whispers of sequestered unity.



He labored so hard to establish his wealth  
that he had no time left for his family's health.  
Now his fortune's divided, his body is numb,  
and his soul can afford but a heavenly slum.



Show him the rudder, but don't steer his boat.



"I," the thinnest word in the dictionary, easily slips into  
most of our thoughts.



Live like the bee, who distills the scent  
of blossoms he's not even bent.



A deed of love pulls a hidden string  
which makes a bell in heaven ring.



Of non-essential stuff  
we never get enough.



Physicians, if they wish to heal,  
must sometimes drop their tools and feel.



If some harvest isn't spared for seed,  
we forfeit next year's crop to greed.



Some folks there are  
who can see afar,  
into auras, through walls,  
down ancient halls,  
but weird sights fill their life  
with such anguish and strife



that they curse their clairvoyance  
as a major annoyance.



Pain kindly wakes up stupidity  
lest it slumber through eternity.



A sharp tongue cuts itself.



Love is the key that unlocks the door of the visible to  
reveal a magnificent invisible.



We storm and shout  
when life caves in,  
then blame without  
and not within.



When Truth needs a voice, silence lies.



These troubles he calls  
the work of the devil  
may be waves of his old days  
returning to level.



To suffer least,  
control your beast.



Every love affair ends **in** marriage, ends **a** marriage, or  
just ends.



Competition may appear to be achieving great things for  
us, but it is forever dashing itself to pieces against the  
rocks of its inherent conflict. Cooperation is slow, quiet,  
and unspectacular, but it seems to work better, perhaps  
because it taps into a deeper spring.



Few men are unmoved by a gentle look, whether from a  
devoted dog, a pretty girl, a contented cow, or their  
mother.



Because they're on the climb,  
the ambitious have no time,  
but those who refuse to aspire  
have time to sit by the fire.



Seeing believes, wisdom knows, and love is.



To please the crowd,  
be bold and loud;  
to know God's will,  
be very still.



Truest gifts cannot be wrapped.



The best-laid plans of mice and men too often work.



Love can slip into a padlocked heart.



For heaven's sake,  
all things break.



What God has put asunder, let no man paste together.



Let the weary past sleep.



A gift required by convention  
is an uninspired invention.



A body gone wild  
is a temple defiled.



Though we say we "knew better"  
than to act thus and so,

our deeds show our needs  
and reveal all we know.



Her anxiety about life's end  
makes her piety seem like pretend.



Thank God if your car breaks down oftener than your  
body. Some bodies are lemons.



Happy are the wantless, whatever they have or lack.



Harsh words may fall short of fights,  
but a human bark always bites.



Married couples do well to imitate the loyalty of dogs and  
the self-control of cats.



Dress like a fire  
to hook his desire,  
like a cool mountain stream  
to win his esteem.



The main trouble with living as if there's no tomorrow is  
that there always is one.



No separateness, no crowds.



Each day is more evidence of forever.



Do your best and leave the rest.



The dog that quits barking can get some sleep.



Undeserved praise is like a hair in your milk.



The moon and computers are benignly unresponsive to  
anger.



Beware of a man with a mission.



We can speak only so many words during our lifetime, so  
why waste them with gossip?



The heart loves unity. The mind loves diversity. The body  
settles for flattery.



When the grass appears greener on the other side of the  
fence, the illusion lies not so much in the grass as in the  
fence.



See with your heart--it never needs glasses.



We all have free will. In fact, our will is so free that we  
seldom have much control over it.



The cause of anything is no less than everything.



We've wanted since youth  
to see the truth,  
but we spoil it competing  
for front-row seating.



Only when the first janitor enters the library in the  
morning does it once again contain truth.



I cry out into the silence to let me hear it.  
No reply but silence.

## **Spin**

Mr. Forever tossed me out  
for a little spin  
toward the ground of being,

and zing! here whoever  
I am is, alive and  
spinning planetwise.

From earth not far  
can I seem to stray  
nor live beyond my time  
nor see beyond my sight

since Mr. Forever firmly  
holds the string reining in  
the yo-yo that I am.

## **Spirits and Spooks**

### **A Rhyme for Halloween**

Today is the ghost of the future's past--  
your now is a ghost,  
my now is ghost,  
for whatever we do will last.

There's hope for tomorrow's yesterday--  
you are a hope,  
I am a hope,  
if we nourish each other today.

Regrets are old spooks that may rattle their chains--  
fear is a spook,  
hate is a spook,  
and so are diseases and pains.

So a spirit sits down in your rocking chair--  
What can it do?  
Can it say boo?  
Just smile so it knows that you care.

Halloween raises our old spooks and bummers--  
feelings that dump,  
nights that go bump,  
and dumbs that evolve into dumber.

But the morning will bring in the Day of All Saints,  
who were able to clear  
their existence of fear  
and their motives of self-serving taints.

What saints may have done, surely any can do  
if we make a start  
and open our heart  
so that giving and love may flow through.

Today is the ghost of the future's past--  
your now is a ghost,  
my now is ghost,  
for whatever we do will last.



## **Stars**

Skyspread of stars  
on this clear night  
quivers my heart  
because all these  
are merely what  
can be seen.

Stars may see me  
naked in clothing,  
caught up in the  
heresies of here  
and there, now  
and whenever.

"Brothers," I yell  
into the infinite,  
"Greetings to all  
sources of light!"  
The aftersilence  
calms my heart.

## Still Life

Sunday mind  
picks up its pen  
behind easy-chair eyes  
when, three inches left from a  
stained-glass cardinal hanging  
red against the window glass  
from a suction cup and hook,  
is seen a real dove outdoors  
fluffed up for warmth  
on a telephone wire  
amid almost no  
snowfall.

Glenn Gould's  
Bach Toccatas  
play precisely through  
the furnace blower's bass  
while an off-duty iron  
stands unplugged and cool  
beside its folded handkerchiefs  
on a flimsy-legged ironing board  
between here and the brown couch  
that bears a draped gold afghan,  
throw pillow, and open briefcase.

Eyes divert  
to a tiny white nick  
in the near edge of the lamp table  
and stare for measureless minutes--  
then return without reason  
to the window.

The dove hasn't moved, nor has the  
window's cardinal of glass perceived  
this breathless snow, so light  
as to be nearly finite.

## Storm

when the storm comes  
aprons turn into kites  
and meadows roll up their grass  
as you hang on tight to unknowing

when the storm comes  
all sayings gain great meaning  
aha is as real as rocks  
but the gale isn't hearing you

when the storm comes  
the mast breaks away and floats off  
before you can lash yourself to it  
and the sirens won't stay on the shore

when the storm comes  
the moon jumps under the cow  
and laughs at the little dog  
then takes back the spoon and the dish

when the storm comes  
all yes becomes quite maybe  
all no seems not so bad  
as you hang on tight to unknowing

when the storm comes  
flowers recite scripture  
trees are genuflecting  
and logic's good for a laugh

when the storm comes  
all history rolls up in a ball  
all tomorrow was never heard of  
and the now impossibly grins

when the storm comes  
thunder and winter both weep  
clouds seem turned by a crank  
the crank turned by an ogre

\* \* \*

when the storm abates  
the waves all merge into one  
which is as good as calm  
but you hang on tight to unknowing

when the storm is all over  
the sun is back in its place  
everything is everywhere again  
but you're still not sure moons don't laugh

## Storm Tea

Please, come on in.  
Those kerosene lamps,  
the ones by the windows,  
are flickering today.

Listen to November's gale out there  
moaning through leafless trees  
and twisting off sickly limbs.  
The winterbeast clears its throat, eh?

How did you make it  
through this windstorm  
that rattles my picture frames  
against the walls?

And why are you here  
when no one else came?  
But never mind my questions--  
welcome, then, to tea.

Welcome, yes, to tea--  
to tea from a pot I forgot I had  
in a far corner of the cupboard.  
Darjeeling today--I hope it's okay.

How did you find my place--  
not to mention why--  
or, did what's here  
find you?

Now here, have some sips  
and stay as long as you can,  
for the wind outdoors  
is surely fiercer than we.

Window lamps flickering  
near you and me and tea--  
given everything,  
what else would there be?

## Stray

As I gaze nightward at our  
volunteer chandelier of stars  
light-years away (each point  
a twinkly memory of a light that was),

a white tomcat approaches me  
like an old friend and brushes  
my pantleg, crying up from the snow  
as if in hungry agony.

I fetch some dry cat food,  
pour it into a Styrofoam tray  
on my porch, and watch him  
dine with great crunching.

My eyes in the blazing sky again,  
I drink measureless ancient light  
into my emptiness as a gift  
from the magnificent All-of-it.

Is our future in the stars?  
I laugh aloud into the night air,  
feeling the moment so mightily  
I care little for any answer.

The speckled black overhead ocean  
absorbs my laugh with dignity  
while the white stray, finished with his meal,  
wipes his chin on my pantleg.

A universe above and a cat below  
circumscribe my being in this  
delicate wintry instant--  
love coming from both ways.

## **Suburban Reverie**

Watering the flowers,  
I happen to think of  
all the famous authors  
working on their newest  
books.

Mowing the yard,  
I wonder how the  
great mathematicians  
can prove their theorems  
even with computers.

Sitting in my front yard,  
listening to the songs  
of cardinals and wrens,  
robins and blue jays,  
I wonder at the amount of  
practice an opera star  
must submit to.

How about the columnists  
and cartoonists and  
astronauts and painters,  
all being  
something?

Here I am,  
sitting in my front yard,  
in an aluminum lawn chair,  
staring at my suburban home,  
supporting and  
supported by a nice family,  
wondering,  
wondering.

I'll water the flowers a little more.

## **Sudden Entrance**

Down below the library's  
lowest level  
we came to an entrance  
brilliant white and ellipsoid.

My companion looked in  
and called "Anyone in here?"

We began to enter but then  
my companion put up his arm  
to stop me.

We listened for a moment.

My companion whispered to me,  
"He wants to come back  
as flower drops."

Whereupon I awakened.

## Sun

Our sun  
as seen by  
the asleep  
is a space  
heater and  
a day lamp  
but  
oh honey  
how very  
much we  
are in it  
and are it  
and are and  
forever are.

Copyright © 2001 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## Sunday Profundity

As the sun pulls up  
the blanket of night  
to its western chin  
and sinks into slumber,  
our neighborhood transforms  
into a blend of haunting sounds.

An owl cries out--bats flit by--  
something whispers in the grass.  
A distant rumbling train wails out,  
then wanes undulatingly away.  
Two hidden toms of a feline triangle  
howl their indignity into the dark.

A throaty sports car rushes by  
with radio booming  
to replace  
the dangers of silence  
with the safety of din.

The neighbors sit and gesture indoors  
like a mute puppet couple between the curtains  
of their lamplit picture window,  
their children eating popcorn near a vacuous tube  
that splashes youthful eyes with artificial color.

No boundaries here outdoors  
except the neatly folded edges  
of the universe, tucked in  
behind a sea of gleaming stars.

When Monday morning opens up  
its brilliant eastern eye,  
a thousand fervent birds with thrill  
and trill their greetings  
through the bedroom window glass  
in rows of mortgaged homes,  
alerting sleeping citizens  
the coast is clear once more  
for them to venture outside  
(after coffee)  
to their dewy cars  
and motor off into their week.

## **Suppose**

Suppose that  
many who went before  
are still here--as us--  
and we now go before  
all future lives--of us.

Suppose that  
one major all-of-us  
is being lovingly built  
from billions of me's  
as they labor or shirk,  
create or destroy,  
rejoice or agonize.

Suppose that  
from separate confusion  
where the me is king  
all grow toward a fusion  
century by millennium  
which births a new being,  
its cells and organs we.

Suppose that  
space is pregnant with us.

## **Sutra Salad**

If contentment is enlightenment, then a cow is Buddha.

The kindly man in the mountain cave spoke but briefly: "Search for a way to stop searching."

Ecstasy may have to sweep the floor tomorrow and hate it. Joy works long and lightly.

Life is a backwards meal. We are born with a full plate, getting the dessert first, and we end it with the broccoli and woody asparagus.

The difference between an evangelist and an egotist has yet to be discovered.

Do the holy ones desire desirelessness so that they can do whatever they want to?

Why do I like certain people more than others? Because I see a glow of divinity in them? Because they smile and give me things? Because my weaknesses are their strengths?

Gambling dies a little every time somebody throws away an unopened letter from Publisher's Clearing House.

Like a dog chasing its tail, I struggle toward peace.

Prayer is a boy throwing his ball at the moon and hitting it.

### **The Guru Scam**

1. Here's where you are.
2. Here's where you want to be.
3. Here's what I can do for you.
4. Here's how much you pay me.

The purest forgiveness is not to have noticed. To forgive, therefore, is not to.

A philosophy is a well-dressed metaphor waving from a limousine window.

A religion is a philosophy with a fence around it.

Unless it's just fun to do, helping blows up the helper's balloon a bit.

## Symposium

I sing a song of joyous life,  
Tra-lee, tra-la, tra-lee;  
I dance about my dainty wife  
and tip a glassful of glee.

---

I tell a tale of mine olden age,  
and there, and so, and thus;  
life's wisdom is my single wage,  
and I can't see who's driving the bus.

Copyright © 1982 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Table Grace**

We deeply offer our thanks  
to the Deepest of Thankables  
and our abiding love  
to the Most Abiding of Lovables  
as we gather here  
in grace under grandness  
humbly to eat of the earth  
so that ripples of renewal  
may nurture and empower our  
sweetly imperative lives.

May the sustenance we now  
receive within ourselves  
enable us to give out  
more than we possess  
as our lungs and souls  
breathe more than is air  
on our chosen journey  
into more than we know.

We honor the One within us  
while dwelling within the One.  
Amen.

## **Taps**

*New words for  
the familiar tune*

We are sad  
that you've gone  
from this world  
which is still  
racked with war,  
where from hate  
bombs make haste--  
to lay waste.

May we find  
Light within  
that will guide  
us through dark  
fears and pain.  
For this world  
may we care--  
peace be there.

We can long  
for good will  
in all minds,  
in all hearts,  
in all souls,  
but for now,  
here you lie--  
Friend, good-bye.

## Tavern Talk

Did you ever look deeply  
into the eye of a chicken?

No, you say,  
they have  
nothing between their eyes  
but cartilage,  
and you laugh at your little joke.

Did you ever look deeply  
into the eye of a chicken?

Yes, you say, and  
it came over and bought  
me a drink,  
and you laugh some  
more.

**Did you  
ever look  
deeply into  
the eye  
of a chicken?**

No, you say, have you?

Yes, I have.

What did you see? you ask.

I saw a light like a little  
egg-shaped sun,  
and inside it were countless  
smaller eggs.  
It was like touching my eyeball  
to a live wire,  
and it lasted for only a split second,  
but I saw infinity in the eye of a chicken.

Yeah, I saw that once in a waitress's eye,  
you say with a snicker.

Same infinity I saw,  
only I didn't have to leave a tip.

## **Thank You**

Thank most you  
for all little things big.

Beams of kindness  
illumine all paths of you

and I am days on end  
in your gentle debt.

Accept please this  
as my up payment.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **Thanking the Sweet Silence**

An exquisite calm has set in  
after weeks of chaos in my being.  
That thunder, formerly so rockingly loud,  
is now a muted murmuring in the distance.

My new peace is no more explainable  
than the prior violence of vibrations  
that was ripping my heart out by the roots  
and leaving me to decay by a careless roadside.

Would that there were someone to thank,  
even myself, if I somehow caused my own release  
from those taut janglings and knifelike fear  
into a timely if startling serenity.

The planets and stars are so hushed, so calm  
that there seems little reason  
for any iota of human stress and strain.  
To emulate our silent orblike brothers

would seem enough to find peace of soul and mind.  
But every orb has earthquakes, storms, and seething fires.  
Its quiet, beaming benevolence through clear skies  
may be a billion cataclysms deep.

Thank you, silence, from the depth  
of my tumult as well as the pinnacle of my euphoria,  
and may you permeate my porous existence  
with a tempered bliss from deeper down than death.

## **These Scales Tell Tales**

These scales tell tales of gravity  
against our mortal frames.  
They weigh who choose to step on them  
and have no use for names.

But let us weigh the scales themselves  
against more subtle things.  
Is heavier or lighter weight  
the chief divide life brings?

Do souls have weight? Do angels fall?  
Will goodness tip the scales  
a little more than ill repute?  
Just here gravity fails.

Copyright © 1982 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

# Thoughtlets

## for a Quiet Mood

### Our Origin

Either:

No one knows our origin, or

No one knows *who* knows our origin, or

People know people who know our origin  
and I'm not one of them.

Even so, perhaps the mystery of our  
origin has a solution that is in plain view.

### Where Are We Going?

We are like electrons laughing and  
dancing in a wire. We never go far along  
the wire, but the magic we conjure up in  
the process, in the here and the now, may  
also closely resemble our destination.  
Electricity abounds in laughing and loving.  
Are we going, then, to where we are?

### What Is Doubt?

Doubt is the snake squirming inside us  
when we feel superior to teachings we  
little understand that are merely poorly  
taught. Doubt justifies (or tries to) a  
chronic indolence within those who scorn  
the sacred as being decay and who shun  
advancement as being delay.

### What Is Faith?

Faith is an enthusiastic arrow shot toward  
the open sky in hopes of hitting some  
target. Faith climbs and yearns. Faith is  
strong enough, some say, to move  
mountains. But when faith and ego  
intermix, there can be a mighty  
hollowness, a thundering emptiness.  
Purest faith quietly and simply serves the  
community.

### Education

Education is the process of insisting upon  
your essence ever more gently. A seed's  
essence shoots a stalk up through dirt and  
manure--and matures. You are the seed  
and stalk. The school system is the dirt.  
The curriculum is the manure, because of  
which and in spite of which you blossom.

### **Hiding**

The eyes are the windows of the soul, and the mouth's expression is the window of the heart. Children know a fake smile because it fails to match the eyes. They use the voice as a reliable stethoscope. Gestures, too, are a wind-vane revealing the direction of the soul's breath. Eyes, mouth, voice, gestures: these instruments of discovery, plus time, reveal all hiding.

### **A Mess**

Order unperceived is called a mess. A mountain range is then a mess of piled rock, trees, and snow. A rain forest is a mess of flora and fauna. An artist's home may be a mess of paint, canvases, and brushes. Who sees messes? The one who judges. And who judges? The one who is blind to order under disorder.

### **Seeking**

Seek, and you shall find another thing to seek, until you find a grave. Can you drop your seeking? If you can, your seeking may in turn release you. You may then find yourself to be anchored rather than self-yanked by a leash along some self-serving path. You may safely drop all, for nothing truly needful can fall away. A light load, no seeking, no path--will roses then fail to bloom?

### **Ism**

Isms organize great thinking into neat mausoleums, each ism occupying its cataloged row and column, sealed off from change and living. Visit a mausoleum, and you may discover that any original ideas you hear are coming from your own soul, which is not dead, nor will it ever be. Never box me up or seal me up with an ism. Being always alive, I may need to whoop or sing. Let me breathe the breeze until I am the breeze.

### **Middle**

Everywhere we go, we are in the exact middle of all thought, all doing. Others whom we think of as far away are also in that middle. We are billions of middles, all apparently separate yet somehow all concentric--all sharing one middle. Eccentricities continually appear and

prevent stagnation, but they, too, share the middle. Seen from a dynamic middle, all may be well.

### **Purity**

A religious costume is more likely to cloak impurity than to reveal purity. Purity is more a dancing than an achievement, and it dances through every heart in unique rhythm. Purity washes the soul with tears whenever there is a breakthrough. We have seen purity manifest in strong men, in hard women, in awful children. We have known purity by the generous act, the comforting smile, the glistening eye.

### **Listening**

To listen deeply is to give deeply. Words decorate the rise and fall of more than our voice. Words are the throbs of our heart of hearts. Take bread and wine as you wish, but honor the communion of the moment--at school, at work, and in the family circle. Hear the hearing of others as well as their speaking. Meet in receptivity.

### **Unfamiliar**

If we observe and honor the unfamiliar feelings that haunt and hurt us, these feelings will be found the growing ground into which we have already been planted. Following the unfamiliar through the tangled thickets of the familiar may lead to a blooming. Yes, there may be awful aching, fear, and upheavals--but one day comes the sweet grace of the blooming.

### **Days**

At the end of a day, is there one less day in your life or one more day in your life? Is your life a stack of days, like a deck of cards? Or is it a stream in which waking and dreaming ripple on a surface above unfathomed depths? "Are we digital or analog?" we might ask. "Particles or waves?" The particle folks bottle the water and sell it, while the wave folks flow in it toward the sea. Lungs and longings whisper "waves" to my own ears.

### **When All Goes Well**

When all is going well, going badly is not far away. When all seems lost, well-being

hovers nearby like the breath of an angel. Exulting will be humbled; despairing will be consoled. Lucky is the one who has no waves like these to ride--or is he?

#### **Spirit and World**

While the Spirit fills our souls with endless hints and nuances, the World carries the World home to the World in little shopping bags. Spirit or World--which is ruling? They may appear to alternate in supremacy, but if you have ever felt the intensity of being worldly, you may agree that Spirit has no rival at all except for lesser Spirit.

#### **Alone?**

I ask Above for guidance, and I remain who I am. Was there guidance? I ask who I am, and I remain who I am. I ask why I am here, and here I am, asking. I ask where my ancestors have gone, and silence reveals only their memories and legends. Answers fail. But now a neighborhood child rings the doorbell and asks to talk. We two answer for each other.

## **Three Gingerbread Men**

Three gingerbread men had a talk  
in which they searched each other's souls.  
The first one stated frankly that he had no soul,  
the second that his soul was pure goat's milk.  
The third gingerbread man had no bones to pick  
nor any goats to milk. He said his soul  
was pure gingerbread.  
The others laughed and ate him up.

Copyright © 1982 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Three Kisses**

The first says  
hello.

The second says  
how are you.

The third says  
it all.

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



### **Three Root Words**

When all the words are done,  
and all the gestures and looks,  
I love you.

When all the miles are traveled  
and all the roadblocks passed,  
I love you.

When all the arguments are over  
and the smile comes after gloom,  
I love you.

Love abides beneath all words.  
Love knows no distance.  
Love dissolves every difference.  
I love you.

## Through the Center

In the humid stillness  
of this August afternoon  
I watch a spider spinning its web  
in the ceiling corner above  
what some may call my deathbed.

Is there a faint whisper?  
I hold my breath to hear it.  
No, no sound at all--  
a silent eight-legged dance  
on the wallpaper border,  
a twirling in air,  
a catching on a thought.

Share the secret  
of your web's design with me,  
fellow spinner in space,  
and I'll reveal it to mankind  
in homely phrases,  
given a few more days on earth.  
Fill me with your simple wisdom  
as I lay complexities aside.

What is this long-lost feeling?  
As your web takes flimsy form,  
my room grows dim, then dark--  
this air will not be breathed.  
Some force is kindly lifting me  
to your delicate ceiling circle  
that I may venture through the center  
toward our one and only Light.

## **thursday**

open you up any thursday yes dare  
be sure to unzip it completely  
and let all perhaps of it fall into

crows on a breeze which land in three trees  
where they raucously planlessly fidgetly caw  
then skittishly fly toward an east deep in maybe

kids into thursday most bicycle fast  
chase whylessly after because without is  
until gravel turns skin into gauze

bumble thursday all companies every one  
muddy with strategy moving into moremore  
hired groans crank oh hum the moneygrind

perhaps on a thursday perhaps on a now  
some crow will discover what when is  
turn human and lose all that zen is

## Tilting

When fall falls in,  
Nature's eyes grow dimmer  
into the sleep of winter.  
Does anyone think to ask "Why?"

Oh, you say, the earth's axis is  
23 degrees tilted, and as it  
revolves around the sun,  
the seasons cycle.

But why 23 degrees?  
What tipped the earth?

Are people tipped 23 degrees inside,  
causing hot and cold emotions?  
Are our dreams for the future  
tipped 23 degrees from coming true?  
Does our day tip 23 degrees  
before evening?

Nothing seems exact on this  
physical plane, nor is it  
exact on the mental plane.

Exact triangles are hollow.  
Exact circles become spirals.  
If I try to think straight,  
I'm about 23 degrees off,  
tipped to the side by self.

But whatever created 23 degrees,  
bless fall and its beautiful falling in.

## The Time I Was Late

December snow covered the ground, and many sidewalks were not yet shoveled. And I was late--I was going to be late for school. The earth might implode like a broken light bulb or explode like a cherry bomb, but I still had to be on time to school. I had never been late.

My report card for my first year of exposure to institutional learning was monotonously filled with A's in the rows for the subjects and O's in the rows for days absent and O's in the rows for times tardy and checks in all the rows for good deportment. My parents never said much about these great accomplishments, but I knew they were secretly proud of me by the way they never scolded me about school. They always got a sort of funny smile on their faces when I would bring home my report card, the kind of smile that is pretty flat and a little turned down at the ends. Then they would say, "Well, that's pretty good. Do you like Miss Larson?" And I would say "Yah." Then they would sign the report card and put it back into its brown envelope and give it back to me saying, "Now don't lose it." And that was like telling me not to lose my right foot.

Grandpa Green had told me when I started to school that he would give me a nickel for every A I got on my report card. So every six weeks I would write him a letter telling him about all the A's I got. An A in reading, an A in arithmetic, an A in spelling, an A in writing, an A in whatever other subjects I was taking, or were taking me. Nine A's, I told him one time at his house. He said, "Let's see, how much do I owe you then?" "I don't know." "Well, a nickel is 5 cents, isn't it?" "Yah." "Well, then, how much is 9 times 5?" "I don't know." "That comes to 45 cents, doesn't it?" "I guess." Then he would dole out the 45 cents or whatever the amount happened to be for that six weeks and like a good thrifty boy I would put it in my little silver metal bank that locked up with a key and I didn't have the key.

But I was going to be late for school. It was cold out and the big hand on the kitchen clock was getting down close to 4 and I had to be at school by the time it got to 6 and Mom was helping me put on my jacket and boots and hat with built-in earflaps and leggings and mittens and I was watching the clock and saying hurry up and I was finally ready to go but just before I got to the door Mom asked me if I had a hanky and I said no and she said wait a minute you've got to take a hanky and she ran upstairs to get one and I sort of had to go to the bathroom and the big hand kept on moving and I had never been home this late before and I stood there holding my lunch pail waiting by the door and finally she came down and helped me put the hanky in my jeans pocket underneath my leggings and then she kissed me good-bye and I ran out the door and kept running down our long street that ended at Mrs. Richards' house and my boots were heavy and I couldn't keep running like that so I walked awhile and then I ran some more and I was running past Charles Johnson's house and I got to the tracks and looked both ways and ran across them even though I was never supposed to run across the tracks because I might fall down and get hit by a zephyr because somebody else had done that once and I was still trying to run but I could hardly even walk and on my Mickey Mouse watch that Grandpa Green had bought me one time at the drug store the hand was down to 5 and I was only as far as the Ford garage and then I heard the first bell ringing at school and I never before realized you could hear the first bell at school from that far away and I started to kind of cry and I was puffing and running and my boots were too heavy and I was kicking snow as I ran and walked and ran again and I started down the last street that led to the school but it was the longest one and I couldn't run any more but I had to so I ran some more and the hand was almost down to 6 when I finally got to the big playground and it was empty and I had never seen it empty before and I stumbled up the steps and when I was in the cloakroom tearing off my coat and boots and hat and mittens and leggings the second bell started ringing and everyone was supposed to be in his seat facing forward with his hands folded on his desk and not talking when the second bell rang and I walked into the room just as the bell stopped ringing saying hopefully to Miss Larson that I was almost late wasn't I and I collapsed into my seat and was sick all morning.

## **Tired Minds**

Our minds,  
like tires,  
tread round and round,  
going places,  
coming back,  
going flat,  
getting pumped,  
wearing down,  
and finally  
retiring.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **To a Telephone Pole**

You, sir, with triangular brace,  
have more common sense than the whole human race.

Copyright © 1963 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## To Be a Butterfly

What you will possess:	What you will give up:
Perfectly clean motives	All of your real estate
Immunity from disease	Most of your lifespan
Freedom from taxes	All of your furniture
Pure atmosphere	All of your clothing
Beautiful wings	All of your friends
Quick reflexes	All your money
Tasty nectar	Physical body
Flight	Heaven
Joy	Hell

Copyright © 2021 by Alan Harris, All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **To My Body**

Dear dundering  
obedient blob that  
I have lived through  
these 45 years,  
have I ridden  
in you  
or have you ridden  
on me?

No Solomon could  
ever distinguish us--  
your actions me,  
your pains me,  
and you me--  
but I somehow not you.

There will be  
a sacred day  
when you fold  
your way into  
the earth  
as I slip freely  
into the air  
as much alive  
as you dead.

I thank you deeply  
from inside  
for long service  
as my antenna  
into a tragic  
comedy program  
I almost dare  
enjoy.

## **To My Wife**

Your glance is beautiful  
when I muster the calm  
courage to look you  
in the eye.

Your voice sounds  
like a symphony  
when I listen to all  
of its overtones.

Your heart sings  
like a canary in a  
cage, heedless of  
supposed captivity.

You light a candle  
behind my eyes  
which illuminates  
my gloomy mind.

Together we plunge  
down this life's waterfall,  
two drops on our  
way to the sea.

We will not forget  
these days nor want to.  
Our love has no relation  
to time or place. We love.

## **To Rolla Swanson**

Our charming corner church  
fills and drains each week  
like a religious rain barrel,  
housing harmonious humans  
an hour or two,  
who then flow out into  
the rivers and gutters of living,  
bouncing and banking,  
filing to the fullness  
of the sky-sucked sea  
for relief, and relife.

Numb need flows along  
these sine-wave streams.  
The men need the  
women need the  
children need the  
future.

This needful flow of living  
winds through a riverbed of love,  
which was and will be,  
with wax and wane,  
as long and long  
as water will be wet.

## **To Sister Marjorie**

For this may God be praised:  
our Christ was raised,  
the temple is secure,  
we shall endure.

The fellow with the tail  
can make us fail,  
can give us loneliness,  
grief, shame, and stress.

There will be sobs and tears  
and barren years  
and prayers that won't take wing  
and stares that sting.

The Father sees it all  
and hears our call.  
He sees our sorest needs,  
our hunger feeds.

Since food and clothes are sure,  
since love is pure,  
since prayers are always heard,  
trust in the Word.

## **To Sleep**

Body and bed go soft.  
Final thinking fades to formless vapor.  
Mattering gives way to "all is well."  
Breathing forgets breathing.  
Shapeless shadows welcome a friendly falling.  
Wishes murmur up through moving images.  
Dewdrop opens into endless ocean.  
Time unknown . . .  
Innerly free . . .  
Floating . . .  
Drifting . . .  
Peace . . .  
80-megaton alarm clock explodes.

## **To Wake Up To**

The world disappeared entirely  
for a few hours.  
Gone.  
Where were you?  
Don't say, in your bed.

You were down in up under beyond worlds.  
You took the whole shebang off  
like your socks  
and went deep into nowhere.

I was there too, but I didn't see you--  
or anyone else.  
Dead into a most alive life we sank.  
Dark into a colorless light.  
Reincarnation, is there?  
Every day, let's say.

Your bed was pregnant all night with you,  
but now, in the morning,  
cut the cord,  
breathe today's first breath,  
cry quietly with first muscle,  
and go.

There is go, and we must.  
There is day, and we mount it.  
It's all a ride but we must pedal,  
a pleasure but we must groan.

Welcome back to your thatness  
after a blissful this.  
You have made it possible  
for there to be whatever humanness is,  
and so have I,  
and every each of us  
in our nowhere core.

## **Together**

There was never a never  
so always as forever  
nor a permanence  
so flimsy as finished.

There was never a happy  
so permanent as joy  
nor a falseness so  
fleeting as autonomy.

Insulation clothes well  
till it suffocates,  
and protection is safe  
till it isolates.

To breathe always joy  
let our hearts strive together  
most brave toward that space  
both above and unknown

where our labor with stones  
can build the next temple.  
Build we together or  
become we the stones.

## **The Tortured Joy**

The company had sent its pamphlets on  
ahead, so everyone in town knew of  
that spring's event. The drift in barber shops  
and telephones foretold a green success.

That night a grandstandful looked on as marching  
marchers marched in song onto the field.  
Speculators in the stands kept up  
a wide-eyed buzz, out-answering each other.

"My God, look what they're doing now, Ethel!  
They're going to raise the cross that man brought in.  
It must have been about like this last year--  
I hope he has the same amount of luck."

They nailed him to the cross, each hammer-stroke  
inviting groans and shrieks from lookers-on.  
The band was playing the national anthem,  
keeping time with the pound--pound--pound.

At his last words (picked up by microphones)  
each person fell down on his knees and bowed  
his head--but most eyes peeked to see the rest.  
Crews dimmed, then doused the floodlights--all was still.

They let him down and locked him in a room  
behind the grandstand for a mournful hour.  
Then Jove (the stadium's janitor) unlocked  
the door to get a broom--and let him out.

Darkness enabled him to cross the field  
and shinny up the cross, but now, instead  
of hanging by his nails, he stood with one  
foot on each side of the crossbar, arms raised.

They switched the floodlights on and aimed some searchlights  
deep into the spangled sky; the band  
broke into stirring patriotic tunes,  
and the crowd let forth a cheer of tortured joy.

The marching marchers marched back whence they came  
and everyone filed out, remarking how  
it was the best they'd ever seen or how  
they thought it might have been improved.



## A Traveler's Tale

*Step over here a moment, if you please;  
I'll tell you a tale which may your fancy seize  
Or, if you're old, may possibly displease.*

Slipping time, of course, will kill a man,  
But, think I, there is something more than time  
In every natural death. Oh yes, say I,  
Vibrations of the supernatural  
Confound our lonely loony lives the more  
For our denial of their awesome power.  
Let me pluck a rich example from  
The undercurrents of my memory:

The beard of wizened white swayed calmly as  
The brittle ancient rocked his pensive chair  
And reveried his many pasts. He knew  
Somewhere within his lonesome bones the ten  
Dead-looking fingers he possessed by far  
Outnumbered his remaining years or months  
Or--what he thought was likeliest--days.  
The optimist, yes, optimist I say,  
(Ten minutes would have been a closer guess)  
Could not foresee his tragedy that day.  
Each time he rocked he minused his remaining  
Seconds by one tick, one tock, one rock.

The red clay jar stood center on the broken  
Top of marble on his yearful desk.  
The center of his life, this jar became,  
For parent after parent of his line  
Of ancestors had forwarded the myth  
That supernatural forces lurked within  
Its clay, some power that governed life and death.  
Religiously, throughout his wifeless life,  
The old man trimmed his fingernails just so,  
Not too long or crookedly or short,  
And dropped the trimmings carefully into  
The timeless jar with utmost caution not  
To let one fall outside its gaping rim.  
Oh, deepest death if ever that should happen--  
Time would shuffle to a sickly halt.

But now yeared eyes could plainly see that death  
Was far from far away: a mound of yellowed  
Fingernails was piled above the rim.  
The jar with all his packing down would hold  
Not many more, he knew. The time when one  
Would vibrate from the pile and fall beside  
The jar was near, too near to free his thoughts  
From dreams of death and musings of its shape.

In silence as he rocked in silent thought  
His black-haired cat traversed the soiled rug  
And stopped unseen beside the desk. It gave  
A weakened leap (it lived on non-existent  
Rats and mice that roamed the undug basement  
Of the one-floor house) and missed its mark,  
Falling on its once-lithe feline ribs  
With an animal thud. The old man stopped  
His motioned chair and sat transfixed, wide-eyed.  
The cat resumed its feet and jumped its all  
And landed on the olden oaken desk.  
Its thready whiskers brushed across the jar:  
A fingernail end fell to the broken  
Marble surface of the desk, and then  
The cat fell lifeless to the rugged floor.

A wave of horror washed the old man's brain--  
He felt a thrill of long-lost warmth surround  
His head and stomach, bones and gasping lungs,  
And down into the deepness of the rug  
He fell, beside the rocking rocking chair.  
As nothingness approached he thought he heard  
His doorbell ringing for the first time since  
The ancient inundation and the garden  
With the stones and fiery wheels had come.

*The aged one was thus undone, kind friend.  
If this has entertained you, please be kind  
Enough to drop into this hat a coin.*

## **Tree Choirs**

High twigs in the trees--  
do they croon nocturnal chords  
to you out of a winter-spring wind?  
Chords not merely for ears, perhaps,  
but chords filling human with being?

Seasonally smitten with tingly new sap,  
each leeward-leaning trunk  
resigns helpless branches to the air,  
eerie groans waxing and waning  
as from a deep unknown  
just behind where you live.

How do you feel?  
Try setting aside your daily newspaper  
and turning into nothing but ears  
to follow these pining strains.  
How far inside of you go those moans?  
Have they turned you inside out yet?  
No?

Then listen all night, all night, all night.  
Listen all night,  
and waken.

Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Turvy**

I rise to sleep  
some bliss to take  
then fall awake  
to earn my keep.

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Twenty-One Lines of Tree**

A fecund soil-seed makes explosive blossom  
In the dankness of the womby underearth,  
Assimilates the healthness rain and chemistrates it  
Steadily into an ever-growing stem and  
Pop, one day,  
Pop.

The embryo gives itself rude birth in dirt.  
A green grapple begins:  
Growth against the grave inexorable final-falling force.  
The yearly climb proceeds.  
Atom mounts photosynthetic atom, clings and lives.

Cold unfeeling freeze-trees breezes wind  
Around a thickened frozen trunk,  
And warm moist licking balms blow teasingly  
Into unfurling sun-retaining leaves.

Its life of cycling seasons lingers on  
Until arrives the fatal year:  
The tree dies--that is all, just dies and falls.

The rotting wood and roots return their loan  
And merge into the ground again until

A second soil-seed makes explosive blossom.

## **Two Birds in a Tree**

A large bird alights  
on a small branch  
at the top of a poplar tree.

He bounces and wavers in the breeze,  
keeping his balance.

Such is human life.

Another bird alights  
on a small branch  
very near the first one.

Both bounce and waver in the breeze,  
but in different rhythms.

Such is married life.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Two Haiku

Our supper table,  
magnet of our emotions,  
lies covered with crumbs.

\* \* \*

Gusting summer rain  
glitters into our backyard  
under shining sun.

Copyright © 1988 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Two Songs**

### *Song of Doubting Logic*

What an incongruity  
that in this flesh a soul can be!

---

### *Song of Spiritual Revelation*

What an incongruity  
that in this flesh a soul can be!

Copyright © 1982 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## Two Windows

Please  
don't be  
fooled by  
what you  
think you  
see through  
that window.

Nothing is there.  
What to see  
is inside  
the seen.

Out there  
is a parade  
of decay  
and illusion.

Inside, where  
seeing is whole,  
waits a beauty  
you long ago knew  
in the rolling  
of your lives.

Try the window  
within.

## **Two Wrinkles in Bliss**

The sun is where  
it needs to be.

Every breath  
in every being  
breathes the rhythm  
of the Drummer.

All is permeating  
every bit of all.

Except for the  
peskiness of  
atoms and egos,  
might not this place  
be heaven?

Copyright © 2000 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Unclosed Loops

Life after rollicking life  
I have littered  
and frittered  
but mostly learned  
within unclosed loops.

The room where I work  
is a monument to  
get-out-and-leave-out  
and all my other rooms  
imitate such open loops.

Shall I dare to suggest  
that every spiral  
is an unclosed loop?  
And point out that spirals  
are the basis of life  
on all of its planes?

Closed-loop people  
I have seen, dazzling  
in their neatness,  
smilingly prompt,  
dickensly proud  
of their punctilious  
buttoned-downishness.

Do devotees of closed loops  
expire with a snap, I wonder?  
And will I expire someday  
with an ambiguous sigh?

Let's broadly hint that  
perhaps people never do expire  
but instead subscribe over time  
to suitably-spiraled-up bodies,  
incremental costumes for playing  
parts in this human drama  
of infinite run. "Death" is all  
the rage these eons, but only  
for those who think their eyes  
see all there is to see.

Let's even risk wondering  
whether supposedly closed loops  
might be minor quanta within major  
evolving spirals.

Unclosed as my loops are,  
I admit to irritating the tidy.  
Closed, the tidy may enjoy  
their control, but beyond  
their cubishness a universe  
swirls with intranesting  
spirals that may little praise  
the painful righteousness  
of an organized desk drawer.

Now, where is that CD  
I bought yesterday?  
Has it spiraled off?

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Universal Questions**

If the sun could speak,  
it might inquire, "Who am I?  
Where am I going?"

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## Upbeat

I wish you  
pleasant days and  
correctable anomalies  
as we all tread  
left-right-left  
through this  
amazingly beautiful  
world of pitfalls  
and exaltations.

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Urge**

From ego-egg of  
separateness we someday  
hatch because we must.

Copyright © 2021 by Alan Harris, All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Urges**

wild wind  
blow me  
safe into  
all here

all here  
let me  
fly out on  
wild wind

Copyright © 2002 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## Ventilating the House of Knowing

Knowing is stowing;  
*unknowing is flowing.*

Building a house requires intricate knowing;  
*living in it will tap a rich, dangerous stream not charted in the blueprints.*

To study someone's horoscope numerically builds up a house of concepts;  
*to cry with someone is to surrender to an indescribable flowing.*

Financial expertise is a product of keen attention and experience;  
*heartfully allocating resources can be done by a three-year-old giving his dog a biscuit.*

To gather straight A's in college is an obedient harvesting of the known;  
*later upheavings may lead to sleepless, fathomless nights that drain away diplomas but open one's heart to a fresh humility.*

Knowing is a keen memory of all the chess openings, over a neatly squared chess board, with well-behaved pieces;  
*unknowing brings one to a bewilderment in midgame from which a victory may spring.*

Knowing within a religion can spawn rickety beliefs, defensive fears, or exclusive duality;  
*to avoid naming the nameless, or believing in the heard, or excluding the "other" can admit a universe into the mind, and release the mind into a universe.*

Experience leads to knowing; knowing leads to more intense experience;  
*then perhaps to a shambles; from which may emanate a steadying awe of the flowing.*

The known manifests as forward motion;  
*the unknown as a gentle, inscrutable smile.*

The knower has developed a system for success, having created a perfect tinker toy windmill;  
*his fragile fabrication already tosses precariously on an unseen boundless sea.*

Many know their appetites, preferring a certain spice or sugar;  
*the mysterious source of all flavors is unknown to them but controls their dining.*

Professors in universities want to increase and perpetuate the known;  
*the Perpetual winks.*

Knowing is to have a well-kept lawn;  
*flowing is to have nothing but everything, to leave it right where it is, and perhaps to care for the lawn too.*

A brilliant nation converts a billion dollars worth of knowing into a Stealth Bomber;  
*to sit at one's dinner table is to fly imperceptibly fast on a planet, free of charge, without need of a target.*

Knowers worry about dying, which might destroy their tinker toy windmill;  
*the imponderable is immense and welcomes windmills of all designs.*

A violinist knows his part; a conductor knows his score; a composer knows how to  
notate his emotions;  
*in concert all of them yield their knowings to the fountain source of music, with  
exquisite results.*

The known is of great price;  
*the unknown is priceless.*

Assertions have been made herein as if known;  
*a puff of wind from no direction will soon scatter them without loss.*

Copyright © 1994 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **A Vision**

Our new world is coming,  
devoid of rage,  
with creatures not eaten  
and guns melted down.

Its two-party system  
is cordial and fair--  
the Forwardists move  
as the Holdists delay.

The trade is quite honest  
and arguing's rare  
as the selfish now give,  
the ambitious now serve.

How can this world  
ever work? you may ask.  
Aren't giving and serving  
quite dull? you inquire.

We will see as we go,  
but the strife in the old,  
based on you, me, and them,  
was a nightmare of self.

What mattered the most  
was mostly matter,  
that dubious deity  
for eyes that see down.

Our new world is coming  
between all the bullets  
and bombs--yes, coming  
as surely as daylight.

## **Voice**

A departed one  
still sounds the same years later  
in the inner ear.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Walk**

I walked with you today--  
with you and the One inside you  
who beamed light through your eyes.

Your voice seemed more than your voice  
and held meaning beyond your meaning.  
Who was in you speaking?

I walked with you and mystery today,  
and now I need to learn Who dwells in you.  
Perhaps the One inside me knows.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Walking the Life**

Activity is a magic  
that clears cobwebs  
from the mind and  
unclogs the heart.

To sit and sit  
or even stand and sit  
is not to walk the life.

Walking the life is  
mixing with others  
who are walking  
their lives too,  
trying to try  
and failing to fail.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Wanting**

I didn't want to have to want  
but I had to want not to hurt  
so I wanted what I felt was best  
but everyone else wanted it too  
and there wasn't enough of it  
so conflicts and hurt prevailed  
even though we wanted peace.

Now what I really seem to want  
is not to have to want at all  
but if I can always never want  
will that be what I'll always want?

Copyright © 2003 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## War Baby

After I came beginningless  
into Illinois in 1943  
as a first-born joy,  
I drank World War II in  
with my sweet mother's milk.

Bombs were dropping quietly  
behind her caring embrace  
and exploding in her  
goodnight kiss.  
I breathed her worried love  
and thought it was air  
if I thought at all.

Twenty-five times my father  
thrust his B-17 "Spot Remover"  
carrying ten trembling airmen  
through German defenses  
and sowed the karmic seeds  
of a quick explosive harvest--  
while I was piling up wooden blocks  
and hearing rhymes  
about moons and spoons  
and thumbs and plums.

So much war-worried gentleness  
was transmitted  
by my mother's reassuring smile  
that perhaps I heard small  
voices back in my throat  
screaming for mercy  
as they laughed.

My father came home  
a new stranger  
who wanted to be king  
of the little home  
my mother and I had shared.  
Who was this intruder,  
this usurper?  
He wrecked our delicate bond  
with his love  
and his jubilant grief  
after peace was declared  
with Hitler tucked into a coffin.

I wanted to play with cars  
and building blocks like before  
but my father dared  
to order me around  
like a bomber crew  
and have me bring him things.

Wasn't it about then  
that I learned  
to kill flies?



## **Washing Windows**

This morning we two are washing  
our upstairs windows, a yearly drudge--  
you indoors, and I out on a ladder.  
Each other's face appears begrimed  
through window after window  
as we wiggle them free from  
their filthy aluminum tracks.

We do lose our patience, let's admit,  
if the other of us turns imperfect  
somehow or startles the first  
with a near-fall or a near-drop.  
Danger and caution are dancing.

Suburban cleanliness fails to fool me.  
I feel underneath this dayness an expansive  
nightness where one's essence may freely  
float between shadows of shadows  
or bask in uncanny glimmers of glory,  
having seen no shape, thought no thought.

Day distracts us. When we think to be  
simply washing windows, an inner  
mysteriousness guides our hands  
from far behind our eyes. Day has  
dangers, but night is as safe as Allness.  
Wipe your glass clean, yes, but be not  
deceived by what you see through it.

I could settle for a diet of only days--  
our windows, their cleaning, shaky ladders,  
plus countless other depthless decoys that  
dwellers of the eye have come to accept.  
But I won't.

I must be soft into knowingless night,  
where quiet bumpings and strange  
bewilderments flow, merge, disappear.  
My appetite is for the fruit of freedom  
growing upon hidden trees of maybe.

Wipe your window, yes, in bright daylight--  
but I insist on washing my side with night.

## Watching No Baseball

We are sitting behind left field,  
you and I, alone in the stadium.  
We watch home plate where  
no batter swings at no ball  
that no pitcher has pitched.

Intently we follow no action anywhere.

The scoreboard contains no numbers  
about forgotten innings.

Behind home plate  
no umpire fiddles with  
his protective pad  
or runs the game with  
shouts and gestures.

We are very much here.

No catcher signals for  
crafty pitches to be hurled  
from the vacant mound.

We sit here  
safely upheld by bleachers  
empty of roaring rabble.

Undwarfed by  
an immense space  
entirely eventless,  
we inhale silence.

No need for talk.

After just enough  
emptying of minds,  
seeing everything that is  
and isn't here  
from arbitrary seats,  
we know that it's over.

Down the winding exit stairs  
we climb without a word  
behind no crowds  
to the busy sidewalk.

We exchange glances  
but don't need to say  
who won.

## **The Water**

You cry your first in your mother's arms.  
The water trickles down the drain.

You soon grow into a toddler's knowing.  
The water flows beneath the streets.

You attend your schools for diplomas, degrees.  
The water enters a nearby stream.

You have your wedding, children, career.  
The water joins a seaward-flowing river.

You make mistakes in ethics; health goes weak.  
The water reaches the peace of the sea.

You retire from your career to savor life.  
The water now is one with all the seas.

You suffer through precursors of mortality.  
The water feels a need to rise.

Your body quits, and you leave it where it is.  
The water rises through a mist into a cloud.

You enjoy long bliss in the space of Light.  
The water joins a darkening cloud.

You feel a longing toward the physical again.  
The water rains down and seeps into a well.

Your vision of the Light has faded now.  
The water is drawn from the well for drinking.

You feel confined and utterly doomed.  
The water breaks.

You cry your first in your mother's arms.  
The water trickles down the drain.

## Ways



The way of water  
is a downward way.  
Humbly it meanders  
under and between  
until some low sea  
breathes it aloft  
into our only sky.



The way of forests  
is to drink deeply  
and unfold sunward  
through brittleness  
into more calm than  
can be understood  
by most ambulators.



The way of deserts  
is to store and restore.  
Cacti are old canteens  
holding what's dear  
behind prickled walls  
while basking loftily  
in abundance of sun.

The way of ways  
is a study in if.  
Go we fully know  
but ends we don't.  
A way is how best  
we can walk with  
our bag so heavy.



## **Weather Forecast**

Plan on being  
warmer tomorrow  
with a 60 percent  
chance of light  
karma mixed  
with opportunity.

No storms  
are in sight  
until Friday  
when a wave  
of retribution  
sweeps in  
from the West  
to spread doubts  
and briefly intense  
doomshowers.

Your historical high  
for this date  
has been forgotten  
and let's not even  
think about your low.

Tune in tomorrow,  
way in,  
and remember,  
if you don't have  
any weather,  
you are somewhere  
else.

## **Welcoming Patrick Keith Harris**

**August 7, 1994**

Where have you been now, oh Patrick me boy,  
Before your grand entrance that brought so much joy?  
Were you out in the starlight quite happy and free?  
Had you any idea who your parents would be?

Were the comets your friends, Patrick Harris me boy?  
Did you reach toward the moon thinking "What a nice toy?"  
Wherever you've been, Patrick, welcome to Earth--  
It's a fairly nice place once you get past the birth.

You will have the best care you could ask for, me lad,  
From Mika and Brian (you know, Mom and Dad),  
Who will give you a bed, healthy food, and much love  
In a home where you'll heighten the blessings thereof.

Three things Grandma Linda and I wish for you:  
May the heaven within you guide all that you do;  
May the bumps on your path make you fearless and strong;  
And may life for you, Patrick, be happy and long.

Grandpa Alan Harris, poet  
Grandma Linda Harris, editor

## **What Lies Ahead\***

What lies ahead no human mind can know--  
Tomorrow may bring happiness or woe.  
We cannot carry charts  
Save the Faith that's in our hearts  
As down the Unknown Way we blindly go.

**\*Note:** The above poem was not written by me, nor have I been able to discover the name of its author. I found it handwritten on the opening page of a 1941 wartime scrapbook kept by my grandmother, Theda M. Harris. I was strangely moved by this poem and felt it to be worth preserving and sharing. I'd be grateful to anyone who can e-mail me the name of its author.

--Alan Harris

From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## What the Pencil Says

A dull red pencil,  
lowly servant,  
spreads lead  
onto a scrappable page.  
Spirit writes through low clay  
to spread high hope.

The pencil says:

*An era of peace,  
now within the reach of human minds,  
is a magnificent certainty  
which will receive us  
as an angel receives a departed saint.*

*The world will be true unity--  
No nations, no empires, no strife.  
God will rule and humans will work,  
and praise, and create, and sometimes die.  
War will be a historical word.*

May we hear the pencil  
which announces these blessings,  
and in our hearts  
may God's will prevail.

## **What To Do**

Place your center  
in the Center—  
the who-most  
of your core  
in the God-most  
of the Cosmos  
for the Now-most  
of Forever.

Copyright © 2021 by Alan Harris, All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **The Wheel of Yes**

Round and round  
the wheel of yes  
(with a thank you at every turn)  
turns.

Every no becomes  
a speck of dust  
clinging only to surfaces  
and frightened by  
the blessed tremendousness  
of bountiful shadows  
out of the unknown.

The wheel of yes brings babies  
out of grandness onto planets,  
sounds out of souls  
into other souls,  
joy out of gloom,  
inspiration out of worry.

Who is turning  
the wheel of yes?  
Who is loving  
amidst the dooms of fear?  
Who is giving  
more than there ever was?

Yes.  
Yes.  
Yes.

## **When Poems Are Still**

It is calm of times now,  
poems having disappeared like a mist.  
Yesterday's nagging scintillations  
that promised a tryst of wordings  
now lie content below any saying, any art.

Quite free from poetry is almost any peace  
until some brazen poet arrives  
to stir up some alphabet soup--  
but the very deepest calms, like a sea bottom,  
lie mute beneath all chop of words and wind.

Today let there be rest from poems  
and from other twistings of the mind,  
for it is calm of times now, free enough  
for wordless breath, and breath, and breath.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **When You're in a Frump**

You really don't care,  
you surely can't dare,  
and your house and your desk  
look a dump.

When no one calls up  
to go out for a cup  
you recline in your chair  
like a lump.

Your life has gone flat,  
you're verging on fat,  
and you'd easily pass  
for a grump.

Well, I'm in a frump  
and you're in a frump--  
let's go have some tea,  
you and me.

## **Who Indeed?**

When winter cracks open  
and spreads infusions  
of early spring air  
through our kitchen  
window screen,  
we thrill at our gift.

New warmth assures us  
of renewal and refreshment,  
like the settling of  
an old argument.

A robin, the first we've seen,  
is poking in the brownish grass,  
and through the window  
we hear our aging neighbor's  
Harley clear its throat  
then murmur slowly past.

Who transforms winter into  
spring? Who melts the patches  
of remaining ice in puddles  
and brings buds to the bushes?

We sense a coming comfort  
with as much faith as a baby  
anticipating a maternal hug.

Spring will soon hold us  
magnificently captive  
in its luxurious cradle  
from which we will  
crave no escape.

In our side yard outdoors  
two neighbor boys play catch  
with a baseball which winter  
had stowed away in the shed,  
being now thrown with gusto.  
Whap! Whap! goes the ball into  
leather gloves which soften  
the impact of youthful zeal.

Who guides this ball  
from hand to glove?  
Who prompts exclamations  
like "Good throw!" or "My fault!"  
oscillating between throwers?

Who cares for us all enough  
on this pivotally warm day  
to bring us sweeter breaths  
after winter's bitter winds?

Who, indeed?  
Yes, Who?

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Whoever Built Chopin**

Who so deftly astounds  
our roots by means of  
Chopin?

How the Preludes  
fly and dip and  
pause and squeeze  
orange harmonies  
lasting for days  
within the heart's  
chamber.

Whoever built Chopin  
and voiced his hands  
can hardly mean us  
any harm.



## **A Wiggly Sopsty**

I falt a wiggly sopsty  
and clev a vagger gand;  
no swegler fad a seggy  
nor vindo sendy mand.

When jigmer salgo varyd  
was tiggy varomund,  
then cladry falgarondo  
with pleggy fabripund.

Copyright © 1995 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Winter Solstice**

Our Christmas cards are sent,  
riding away on ZIP codes and good nature.  
Cards trickle in a few a day  
and say about what we had said  
plus a broken ankle or a bought house.

Our light-filled tree  
with presents around its roots  
gives and gives to the living room.

Soon will be family celebrations  
where ribbons and wrapping paper  
suggest swaddling clothes  
and the heart will say yes, okay.  
Humor will be high and faces flushed  
as wanna-haves come out of boxes  
and druther-haves fail to quite show up.

This drama time is bigger than everybody  
as the kindly solstice breathes love to earth  
in lung-sized packages  
for giving and forgiving onwardly.

Let us have Christmas in all its outer glory  
and, after thinking it over,  
we may inwardly say thank you  
and feel blessed.

*Copyright © 2008 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From An Everywhere Oasis at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)*

## **Within Our Keep**

What is this stillness in the stable?  
What glow is here within our hearts?  
Who lies so small between us?

Far more seems given us in this bed  
than infant pounds and length--  
how weigh, how measure possibilities?

Although just now our baby sleeps,  
his waking eyes reveal an inner light--  
some holy mystery within our keep.

We bow.  
We love.  
We are silent.

Copyright © 1994 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Word**

No mouth big enough to say it,  
no voice sweet enough to sing it,  
but there, riding on every breath,  
is the Word from which words rain down.

Copyright © 1996 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **World**

Is a world hard  
like a cue ball?  
Or beyond touch?

Does it jangle  
with war threats  
or does it hum  
soft in the heart  
like tuned strings  
on a fine harp?

Is a world separate I's  
on a spinning rock  
engaged and enraged  
with each other  
while blinded by what  
they can merely see?

Or is a world precisely  
who one can be  
(within utmost Who)  
subtler than mind  
with endless stairs  
from love up to Be?

# **Wounded Holidays**

**Dedicated to the Compassionate Friends  
and all who are grieving the loss of a child**

Young, they left our homes.  
In a moment, long or quick,  
they were gone.

Dewdrops turned into teardrops,  
the shining sea too small  
to hold our grief.

"Give us our children back," we pled  
as we noticed their plateless places  
at the table.

Regret made a river through our days,  
tempering laughter,  
pervading sudden silences.

Bodies they had through us, with us--  
bodies housing minds and souls--  
no longer.

The holiday season's return  
makes throb now the wounds  
we felt at their parting,

wounds which may heal  
in time, we hope,  
into strength--

but not yet, in this season  
of snowflakes that sting and cookies  
that somehow taste of vinegar.

"If only," goes our carol.  
If only they could return to us--  
but no.

If only  
we could speak with them--  
but no.

If only we could love them  
so intensely that they could  
feel our presence right now--

but yes, yes to this one,  
a thousand yesses--  
they can.

How can they not feel our love,  
being core in core with us,  
heart in heart?

We give love this season to them and  
to each other as plundered parents  
and wounded healers.

With love flowing, something in our lives--  
a magnificent, mysterious Something--  
guides us like a star.

Copyright © 1998 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)

## **Writer's Block Zen**

Mind is empty now,  
free of passing sentiments—  
no wind in the trees.

Copyright © 2017 by Alan Harris. All rights reserved.  
From *An Everywhere Oasis* at [www.alharris.com](http://www.alharris.com)



## **A Younger Friend**

All gosh upmost joy she much so  
has, kindly exploding out of  
her ice cream sundae heart  
topped with quips and smiles

while spinning effervescent futures  
or singing laughinations out of  
I-dare-you presents or geysering  
forth with heartacious good will.

From upper, inner wheremost  
emerges bouncing and penetrating she,  
who can jump a moon or be one  
without or with a cow or three.

Breezy of soul, a dreamer of whims  
that go wham and ideas that go am, she  
and her wand zing out angel dust from within  
to make stiffness and topsies turn dancingly turvy.

## **Yuletide's Deepest Bell**

A scratch-scratch-scratch  
of Christmas card writing is  
wiggling world kitchen tables.

Tight holiday harmonies  
from the stereos fill up  
festooned family rooms.

Annual gladness is  
picking up speed  
as the ringers ring,  
the shoppers shop,  
the bustlers bustle,  
and the hawkers hawk.

Bells remind the weary  
of pulsings in their hearts,  
transforming drone to tone.

Such yearly yuletide waves  
are too magical to be real,  
too real to be magical,  
too just-right to be  
too anything at all.

Yes, talkers overtalk,  
laughers overlaugh,  
givers overgive,  
and eaters overeat, but  
a subtle force is working  
to knit separated threads  
into scarves of good will.

Folks feel an ancient peace  
and join at the heart in joy  
when the Deepest Bell rings  
"One.... One.... One...."

# ***Ponderables***

**Original Observations  
by Alan Harris**

The New Year is like a perfectly clean new house into which  
we all stagger with good intentions and muddy boots.



We all have free will. In fact, our will is so free  
that we sometimes have little control over it.



No separateness, no crowds.



Buy now, and forever comes free.



Well-timed silence is the purest speech.



I cry out into the silence to let me hear it.  
No reply but silence.



If you would hear the song of the infinite,  
listen quietly through the ends of your toes.



Fate remains wonderfully poised when gamblers tempt it.



Human motives are so complex that a judge  
can only be a poet of sentences.



Work, and the world works with you.  
Shirk, and the world ignores you.



Everyone contributes to society—  
some by serving as horrible examples.



Anything you hide is perfectly safe until found.



Infatuation: love so intense, beautiful, and brief  
as to be unachievable by the secure.



Leaving a few stones unturned in a marriage  
or a minefield can be downright healthy.



A society lady's best snub is no match  
for that of a summoned house cat.



You get the most free financial advice  
from people who are in your pocket.



Nobody scolds like a coward.



Whoever first said "Hey, man!" was to become  
the most widely quoted dude in modern times.



A stitch in time saves the theory of relativity.



Music is evidence that beauty, mathematics,  
and time all live in the same neighborhood.



When wealth speaks, greed listens.



When you're down in the dumps, incoming  
advice becomes excruciatingly abundant.



Moment: an infinitely expandable unit of time,  
used often in situations of love or airline delays.



Even with its hassles, life seems to be  
the best thing they've come up with yet.



Occasionally necessity takes its jackhammer  
to our expectations to make way for what  
the chief architect really wants.



People you have to interrupt so they  
can see your side, won't.



Getting your hair clipped tends to make  
your secrets fall out of your mouth.



To marry for happiness may end up  
stretching both words a little.



If every discarded corporate goal in America could be  
changed into a muffin, world hunger might be ended.



"I don't mind dying," the old-timer mused,  
"but I'm sure going to miss myself."



The road to hell is littered with the manuscripts  
of church sermons written late on Saturday.



The cause of anything is no less than everything.



Every new human being is an impossibility  
become inevitable.



In truest love, giving and taking become moot.



At the end of a day, is there one less day  
in your life or one more day in your life?



Intolerance leads to suffering leads to  
investigation leads to compassion.



Friendships with others bring us heaven before heaven.



Brilliance uses fine words; character, pauses.



Anything you can get away with, you can't.



Nothing deepens character like a firmly balanced dilemma.



Rumors are disagreeable to many;  
but then, so is the truth.



Silence is golden, like wedding rings only much scarcer.



Lecture: a verbal dance between voice and attention,  
sometimes accompanied by meaning.



We are most strengthened, over time, by our weaknesses.



Consensus usually belongs to the first one  
who dares to ahem and summarize.



Businessman's Prayer

God grant me the ingenuity  
to escape the things I cannot change,  
money to change the things I can,  
and lawyers to know the difference.





Need we be terribly surprised at the shortcomings  
of a world that is substantially run by the  
personalities who dominate meetings?



The Kindest Safe

Thieves will fail,  
try as they may,  
to steal any money  
you've given away.



A suture in time saves the future.



To find big mistakes, look for big egos.



Perhaps the only infallible way to detect  
a lie is to be the liar.



The kindly man in the mountain cave spoke but briefly:  
"Search for a way to stop searching."



Poetry works best when you ignore the words.



To find order in chaos, stop looking there.



If we only have enough presence of mind to reach out,  
someone may put just the right thing into our hand.



Much knowledge is belief wearing a top hat.



To nurse a few grudges is forgivable if you  
try not to breast-feed them.



Since last century, computers have been enabling  
business offices to proceed much faster  
from one emergency to the next.



Can a fountain be robbed?



The flower hides a seed, and the seed hides a flower.



There's nothing new beneath the sun,  
but luckily, what's old is fun.



Visualization can be important to one's advancement  
in a large company, especially the ability to see  
clothing on naked emperors.



Where would a poet be without an angst to grind?



A loving thought is deeper than the night sky.



Leave the past behind you, but if parts of it  
get back in front of you, ask them why.



The teeth of adversity grow directly  
behind the smile of fortune.



The wall that protects you also confines you.



As surely as a bud, given water, will become a flower,  
the office sycophant, given power, will become an autocrat.



But for your past calamities, your virtues might be fewer.



When the irresistible meets the immovable,  
a telephone rings somewhere.



"Smile" is an anagram of "slime"—  
and also a path through it.



A newborn's first thought: "Now what?"



Our commencement speaker revealed at length  
his firm grasp of the obvious.



An important factor in technology's  
dramatic progress may be coffee.



When you work for yourself, both of you work.



Love is the key that unlocks the door of the visible  
to reveal a magnificent invisible.



When light is shining within, no darkness  
from without can penetrate it.



Everyone, even vegetarians, can benefit  
by occasionally eating crow.



We spend our first forty years making mistakes,  
and our next forty years making more mistakes.



Wherever there's new ointment, can a fly be far away?



Moderation in all things, including moderation.



Friends have love without vows,  
faithfulness without reasons.



The palate can murder the colon.



How can we be sure that infinity is all there?



In a selfish society, the word "free"  
is the most successful pickpocket.



All of life is a near-death experience.



A teardrop is a liqueur to the future.



Those who choose bravely learn deeply.



Earth is unsure footing  
and wealth is insecure,  
but how you've loved and given  
will deathlessly endure.



Exits from the freeway of truth begin at a small angle.



We can't really break the universal laws,  
but if we ignore them, they'll break us.



The intelligent are wary of the smart.



Two invisible antagonists animate nearly every  
board meeting. They are quality and quantity.



He traveled the world, carrying vast  
unexplored territories within.



If life gives us a load,  
a great honor's bestowed.  
Life knows, if we don't,  
that we can when we won't.



Dogs offer you humility. Cats invite it.



Do: a verb sprinkled liberally into airline  
announcements to create the illusion of intense caring.



After 80, the best thing about a birthday is having it.



Pain doesn't enjoy us, either, but it's got a job to do.



"You have mastered it, my disciple. Next week  
we will explore the sound of one hand NOT clapping."



If a cat could speak, it probably wouldn't.



After a motivational seminar you feel like  
new frosting on an old cake.



Walk where your feet are.



The hell you feel is the one that's real.



Every person we meet is both a wonderland and a curriculum.



Hell provides a room  
for people who assume,  
which gets some ventilation,  
but my, what a population!



Kind acts never die, and what is kind in yourself  
was waiting for you.



It's easy to be critical, but it's even easier to be  
bureaucratic, which is why bureaucracy is always  
ahead of its critics.



To know who you are, observe what you do.





A sure way to learn is by ignoring good advice.



Reality is what's left to us after  
all of our failures to find it.



One inevitable can overturn thousands of impossibles.



Even when things are all in place,  
they're very close to being out of place.



Sometimes we get an urge to do some great thing, and we'd  
really do it if someone could just tell us what it is.



The bad news is that you are the slave of your past.  
The good news is that you are the master of your future.



You know you're getting old when you notice that your  
first name is not being given to babies anymore.



History is kept exciting by humanity's  
continuous influx of fresh ignorance.



Computers won't ever become minds  
until they can cry—and mean it.



Taste makes waist.



If such great people have labored so diligently for so long,  
why is there still so much more to do?



Creativity leads to crisis, which leads to creativity.



American work ethic: busy is good, frantic is excellent,  
and burnt-out is sublime.



Our deepest wound may heal to become our greatest strength.



An opinion without self-interest is as rare  
as self-interest without an opinion.



Sooner or later one's purpose in life comes pushing up  
through one's mistakes like a delicate flower blooming  
in a trash heap.



Rainbows are around us all the time, but it may take  
a very dark cloud to make one appear.



Nice days are more made than had.



For later flowers, if we but endure,  
misfortune makes a good manure.



Random silences deepen a conversation  
and add force to an argument.



A guru said to his gathered disciples:  
"There are two kinds of people:  
those who don't know, and those  
who don't know that they don't know.  
A disciple asked, "How do you know?"



To refuse free goods and sold enlightenment  
can prevent a lot of complications.



The moon and computers remain similarly aloof  
when confronted with anger.



Life brings situations in which we feel like Jonah  
or Noah, who were each stuck inside something that  
moved slowly, smelled bad, and couldn't be steered.



A quarter for expertise buys a dollar's worth of peace.



Each human life is like a new symphony heard  
for the first time. It can't be understood or  
fully appreciated until after the final cadence.



When it is time to cry, you do. No volcano is more  
irresistible than a sobbing whose time has come.



When prophets turn to profits, wisdom turns within.



Until we understand silence,  
we only partially understand words.



Is the universe a mindless collection of spinning  
dirt, or does it know what it's doing?  
That is the question of the ages. If the former,  
why are we so intelligent? If the latter,  
why are we so ignorant?



Stumbling blocks make wonderful  
starting blocks for the next race.



A kind act is worth a dozen beliefs.



Mankind's three deepest imponderables are  
infinity, eternity, and stupidity.



A secret, if whispered carefully, will spread  
faster than the ten o'clock news.



About half of humanity have ego problems,  
while the other half seem proud not to have any.



The spouse who loved the caterpillar  
may hate the butterfly.



Progress entails thinking outside of the box to create  
fresh boxes for the unimaginative to think inside of.



Our enemies teach us lessons that our admirers never can.



Calendar: a device for scheduling the unpredictable.



Many newcomers in hell are soon put to work  
designing phone menus.



Sooner or later we get what we want, which would  
be fine if we only knew how to want correctly.



Eternity isn't something we wait for—  
it's what we breathe.



Ecstasy may have to sweep the floor tomorrow  
and hate it. Joy works long and lightly.



Tomorrow holds rewards  
for thoughtfulness today  
distilled from painful errors  
in endless yesterday.



The silence in an elevator full of strangers is  
different from that in a forest on a summer evening.  
The former silence screams of crowded separateness,  
while the latter whispers of sequestered unity.



Even perfection has its limitations. For example,  
a perfect square can hardly roll.



A deed of love pulls a hidden string  
that makes a bell in heaven ring.



When one sits to meditate, the mind may at first sound  
like a jukebox in a cathedral.



The small angers the small.



Each ballot is a bullet unshot.



I, the thinnest word in the dictionary, easily slips  
into most of our thoughts.



Every day is more evidence of forever.



A good friendship, like a good river,  
comes back together after hitting a rock.



Ulterior motives may be invisible, but oh, the smell.



Pain kindly wakes up stupidity  
lest it slumber through eternity.



Thank God if your car breaks down oftener  
than your body. Some bodies are lemons.



You may wish on a star, but you get what you are.



Higher education trains your mind to feel  
good later by making it feel terrible now.



We age in years, but we mature in moments.



We depend upon each other for our independence.



Undone tasks quickly have children and grandchildren.





Months come disguised as days,  
and swindle us sweetly of years.



Business office survivors learn to distinguish  
bluster from need, and anxiety from importance.



Truest gifts cannot be wrapped.



Scrooge no longer hates Christmas,  
now that he's acquired it.



Seeing believes, wisdom knows, and love is.



What God has put asunder, let no man paste together.



Time is all we have, and most of what we don't have.



As Santa comes down the spine from the head  
to the heart, everything seems a gift.



Christmas and a minimum universe both ask for only  
one star and some generosity.



Happy are the wantless, whatever they have or lack.



Like milestones on a journey, our mistakes  
show us right where we are.



The main trouble with living as if there's no tomorrow  
is that there nearly always is one.



Crying makes an inner rainbow.



To find eternity, lift up the minute.



Guilt is a little prison that keeps you out of big ones.



Does the Star of Bethlehem not shine from every eye?



Gifts given give gifts.



In a nutshell, be a nut.



New Year's resolutions divide the resolver into master and oppressed, and history usually favors the oppressed.



The law of track and caregiving:  
when you jump one hurdle,  
the next one is not far ahead.



Your body is clothing  
for the soul that is you;  
your house is a suitcase  
for traveling through.



The thickest jungle to hack through  
is people's ulterior motives,  
including one's own.



There are two sides to every coin,  
and there are far too many coins.



Life is wonderful, but it's awfully time-consuming.



Clichés certainly take it on the chin.



Was yesterday's forever a day longer than today's?



Dandelions bring comic relief to the more serious lawns.



You know it's going to be a bad day when you look  
in the bathroom mirror and there's nobody there.



Cities happen.



Perhaps the airlines hire men with deep,  
confident voices and teach them how to fly.



Few men are unmoved by a gentle look,  
whether from a devoted dog,  
a pretty girl, a contented cow,  
or their mother.



A body gone wild is a temple defiled.



His dark blue business suit has yes written all over it.



When whales can take flight in the air  
and birds can fly under the sea,  
executives then will be fair  
and doctors won't charge any fee.



God hells those who hell themselves.



Ye armies, take up golf.



To retain his professorship, he published a cemetery  
of dead ideas with footnotes for headstones.



Marry money:  
days are sunny,  
life is funny,  
sweet as honey.

Markets crash:  
no more cash,  
tempers clash,  
life is trash.

Once we're burned,  
much is learned.  
What's discerned?  
Bliss is earned.



He labored so hard to establish his wealth  
that he had no time left for his family's health.  
Now his fortune's divided, his body is numb,  
and his soul can afford but a heavenly slum.



Some force, like a magnet  
that cannot be spurned,  
ever brings us those lessons  
which haven't been learned.



So many good deeds,  
costing no one a dime,  
are done by the people  
who have the least time.



Happiness may come in waves separated by generous troughs.



In life no law's known  
to prevent hurtful words,  
as in death one's gravestone  
is wide open to birds.



Everyone is said to be unique, but many people  
seem unique in remarkably similar ways.



We pay for our comforts  
while hardships come free,  
but our hardships pay debts  
that we no longer see.



Voice your choice,  
make your break,  
work your quirk,  
reap your heap.

Pay your way,  
stash your cash,  
gain your cane,  
sleep your sleep.

## Haiku with a View (haiga)

Out in back last night  
Icicle drippings  
Lazy snow circles  
Western glow fading  
Who times Time?  
Stark in winter's wind  
depth of azure sky  
tried to buy the sun  
Each leaf is a life  
Like a demagogue  
Sooner or later  
If the sun could speak  
musical colors  
mountaintop vision  
silent cathedral  
no smoke now rises  
flowers stand sentry  
first sun of spring floats  
thunderbolts today  
A falling fall leaf  
Orange maple leaves  
Sitting by flowers  
Glued by gravity  
Trouble at the trunk  
Gnarled persistent tree  
Full moon through the trees  
All roads out are blocked  
Leaden clouds rumble  
Opening their hearts





Out in back last night  
I looked Venus in the eye  
and the young moon smiled.

Alan Harris



Icicle drippings  
slower under western blush  
hint frozen silence

Alan Harris



**Lazy snow circles  
crystals landing like light planes  
on brown grass runways**

**Alan Harris**



Western glow fading  
decrecendo of songbirds  
stars surprise the eye

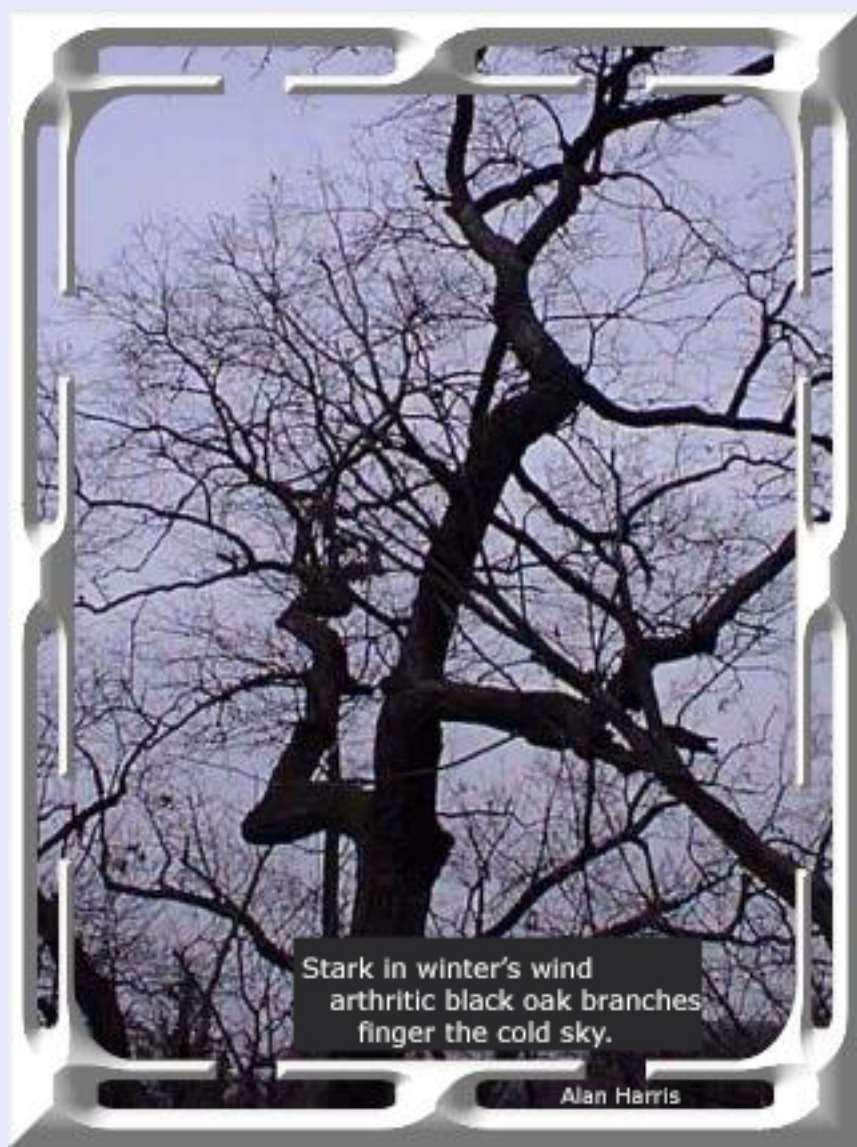
Alan Harris



*Who times Time and notes  
when it stops? Where is a clock  
in absence of hours?*



*Alan Harris*



Stark in winter's wind  
arthritic black oak branches  
finger the cold sky.

Alan Harris



*depth of azure sky  
recedes to far galaxies  
behind daylit moon*

*Alan Harris*





*Alan Harris*

*tried to buy the sun  
paying installments each day  
until it owned me*

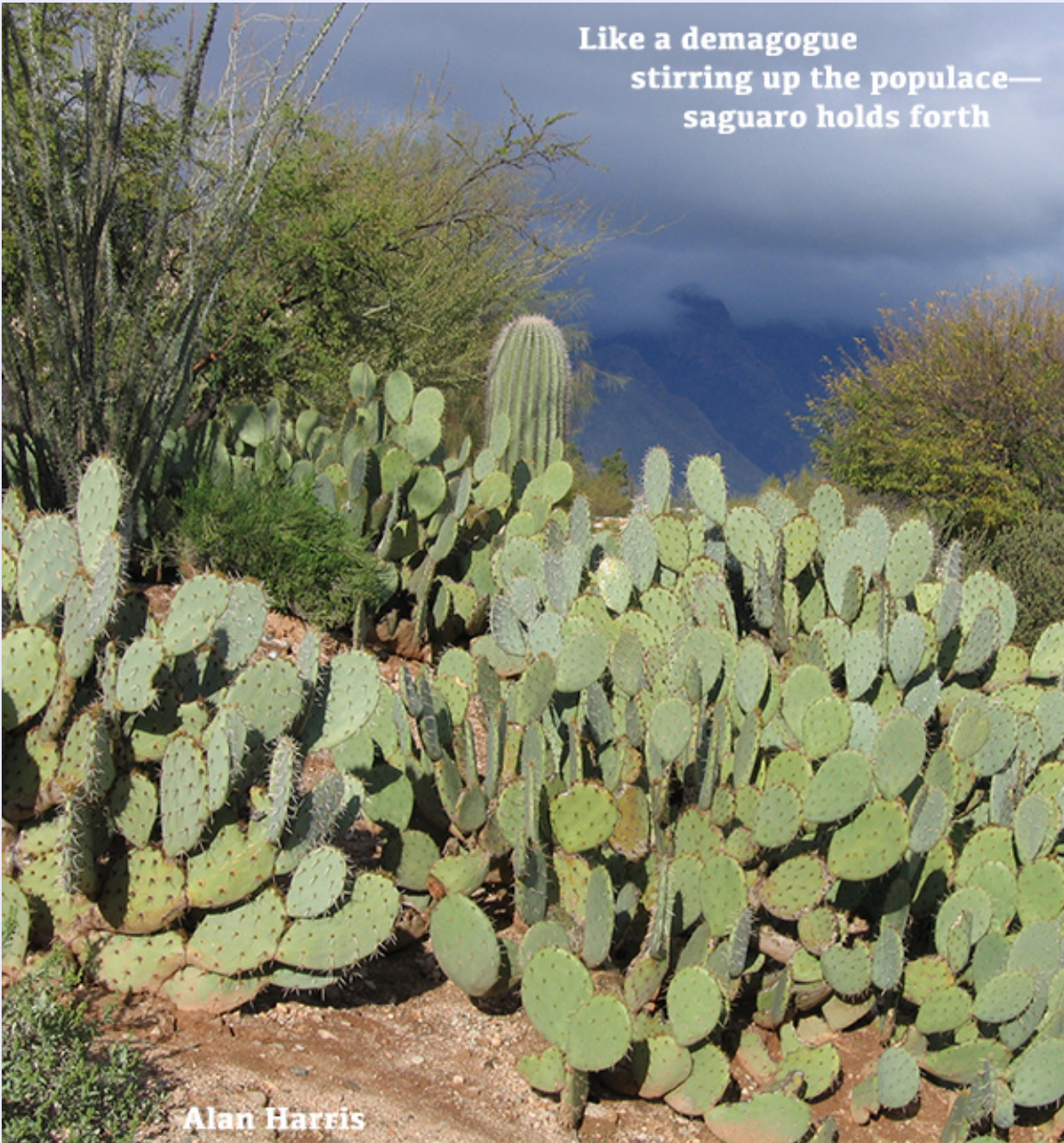




*Each leaf is a life  
that knows little of the whole  
but completes the tree.*

*Alan Harris*





**Like a demagogue  
stirring up the populace—  
saguaro holds forth**

**Alan Harris**



Sooner or later  
our highest purpose in life  
finds its way to light.



Alan Harris



If the sun could speak  
it might inquire, "Who am I?  
Where am I going?"

Alan Harris



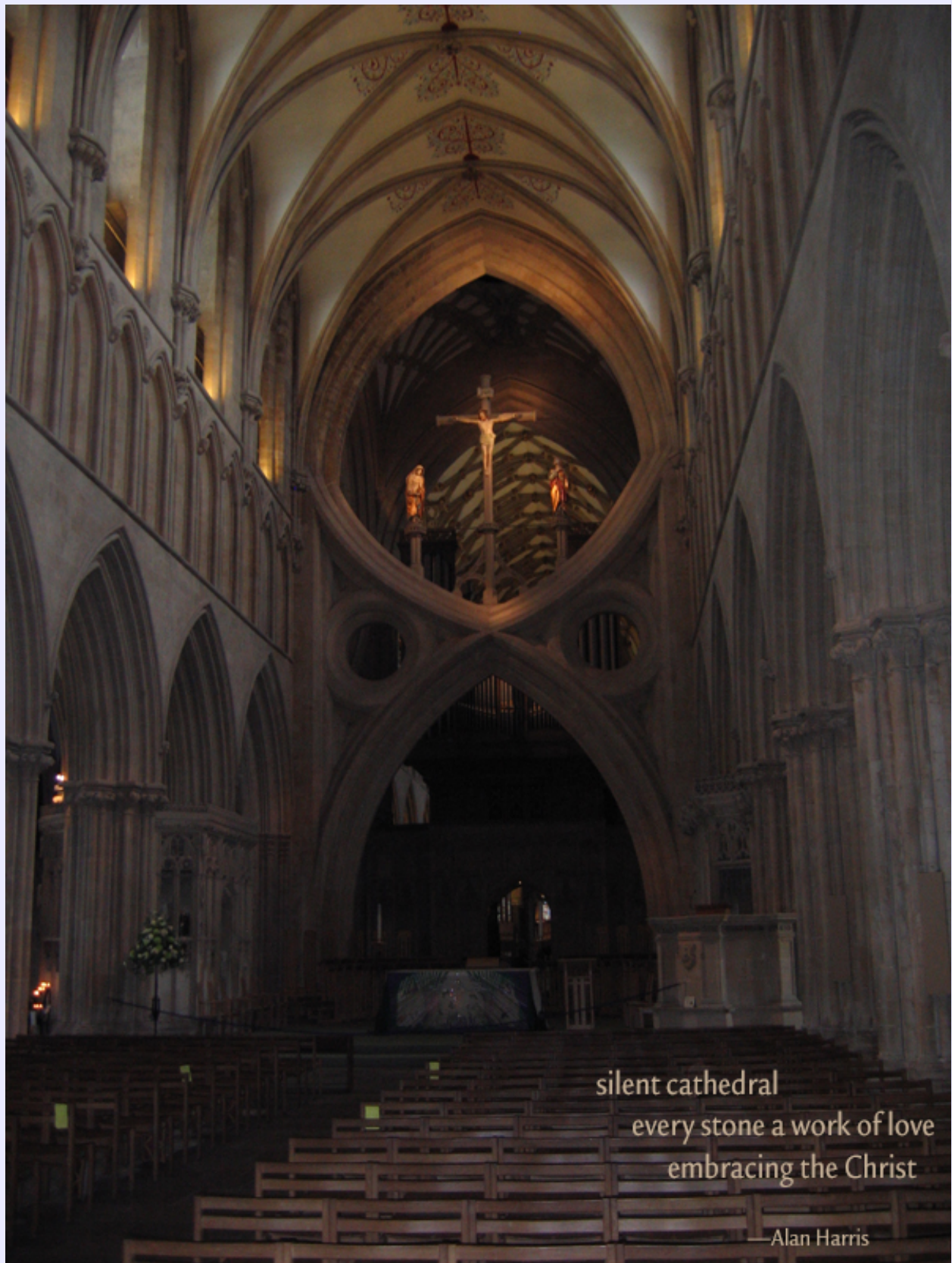


mountaintop vision  
reveals a whispering valley  
where all is in place



Alan Harris





silent cathedral  
every stone a work of love  
embracing the Christ

—Alan Harris

no smoke now rises  
out of old chimneys at dawn  
dark on dark in rows



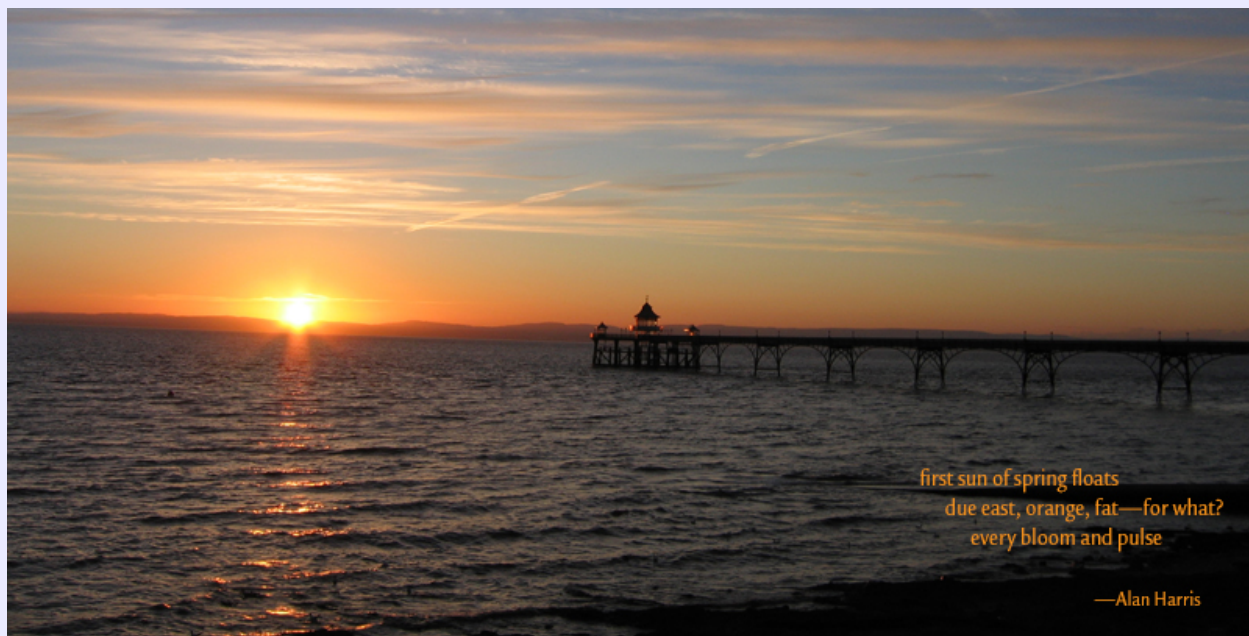
Alan Harris





flowers stand sentry  
sweetly protecting barbed wire  
from sheer ugliness

—Alan Harris



first sun of spring floats  
due east, orange, fat—for what?  
every bloom and pulse

—Alan Harris

thunderbolts today  
are absent by the thousands—  
but this blue won't hold

Alan Harris





*A falling fall leaf  
lightly taps my left shoulder—  
"Yes," I say, "I've heard."*

*—Alan Harris*



"Orange maple leaves,  
why can't I prolong your lives?"  
"We're the clock for yours."

— Alan Harris —





Sitting by flowers—  
silence—until a petal  
falls upon a stone

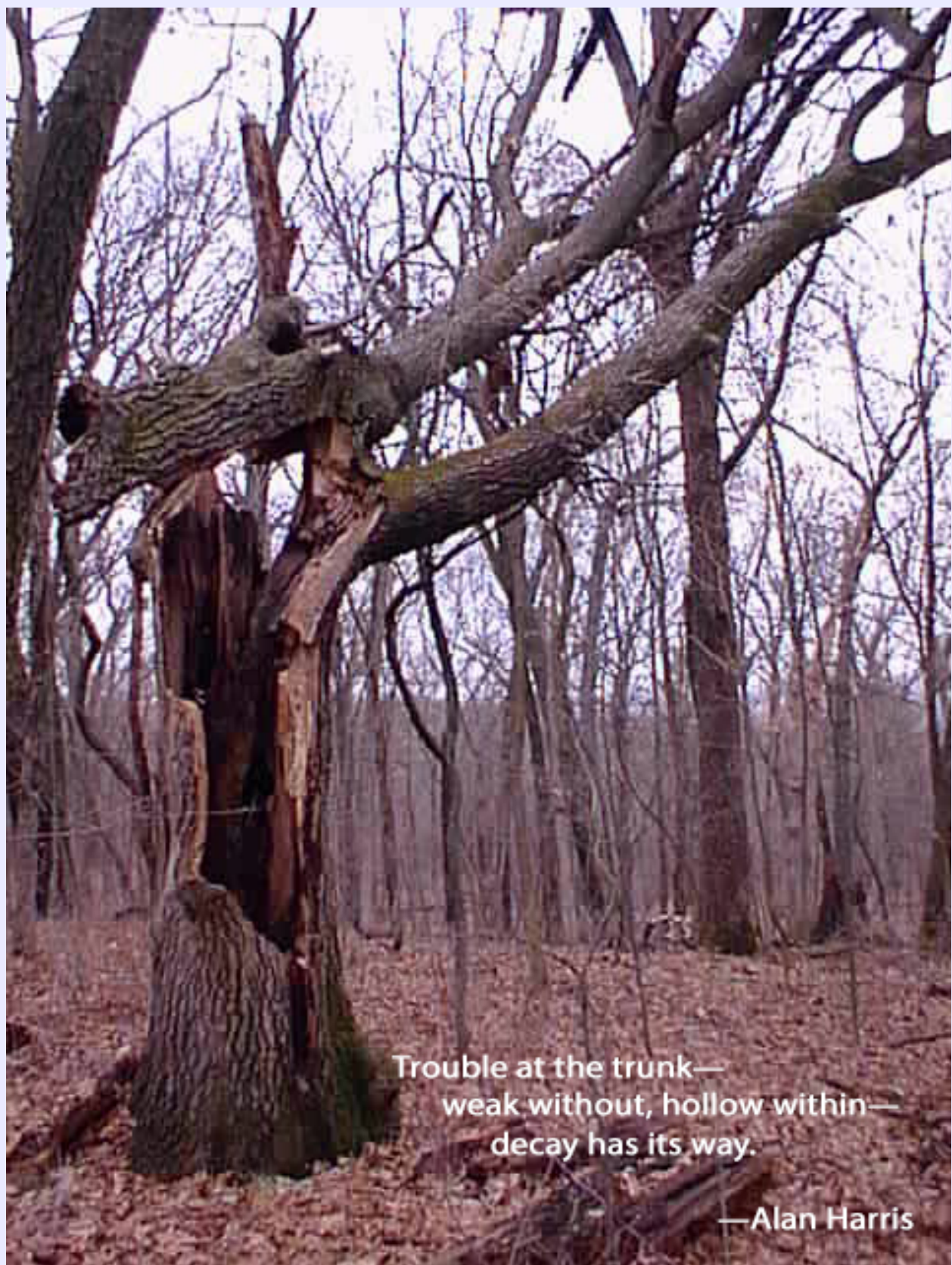
—Alan Harris



Glued by gravity  
dry stone wall snaking over  
green hills in England

—Alan Harris

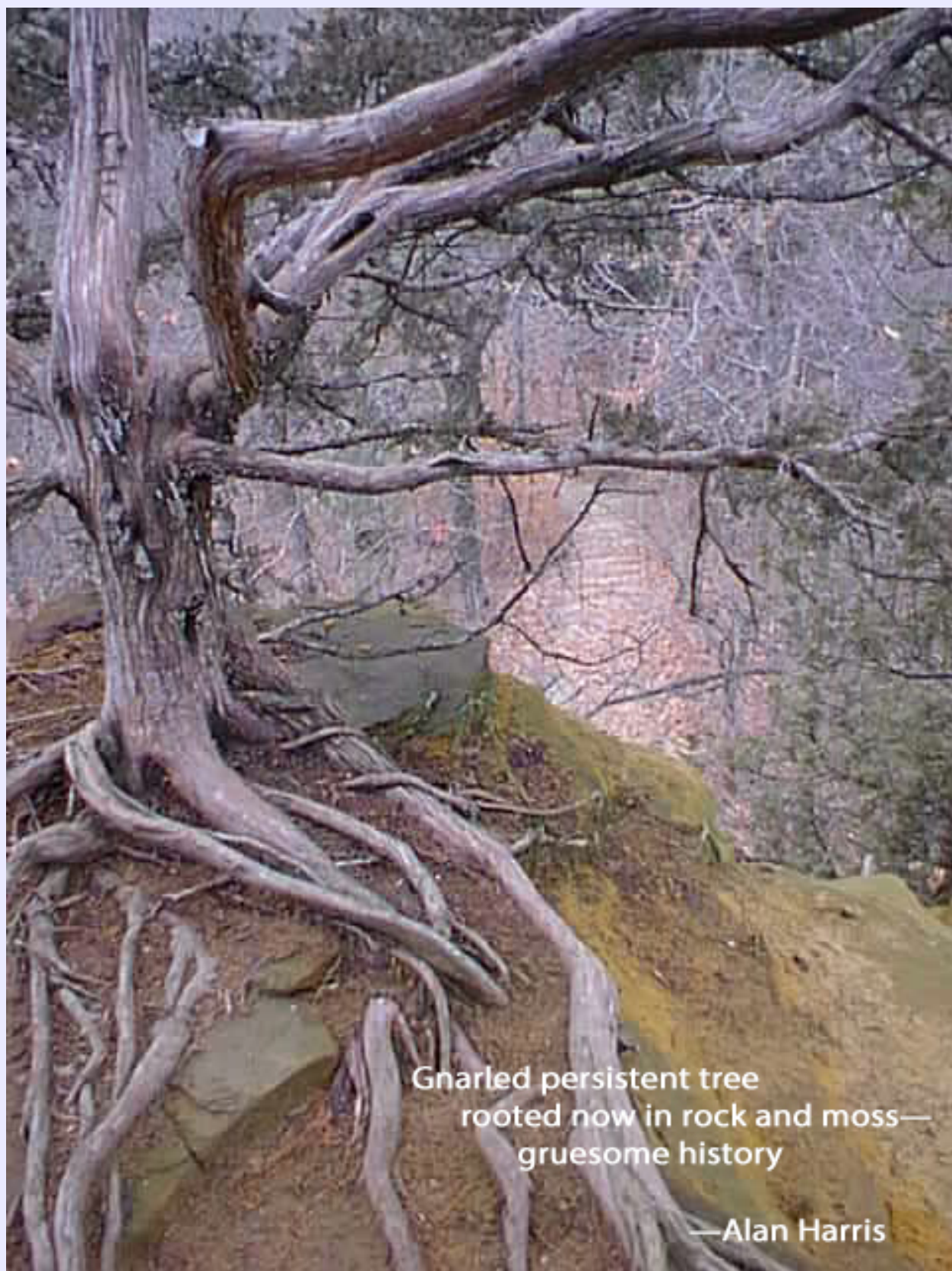




Trouble at the trunk—  
weak without, hollow within—  
decay has its way.

—Alan Harris





Gnarled persistent tree  
rooted now in rock and moss—  
gruesome history

—Alan Harris

Full moon through the trees  
reflects the Lord of Being—  
some just think it's neat

Alan Harris

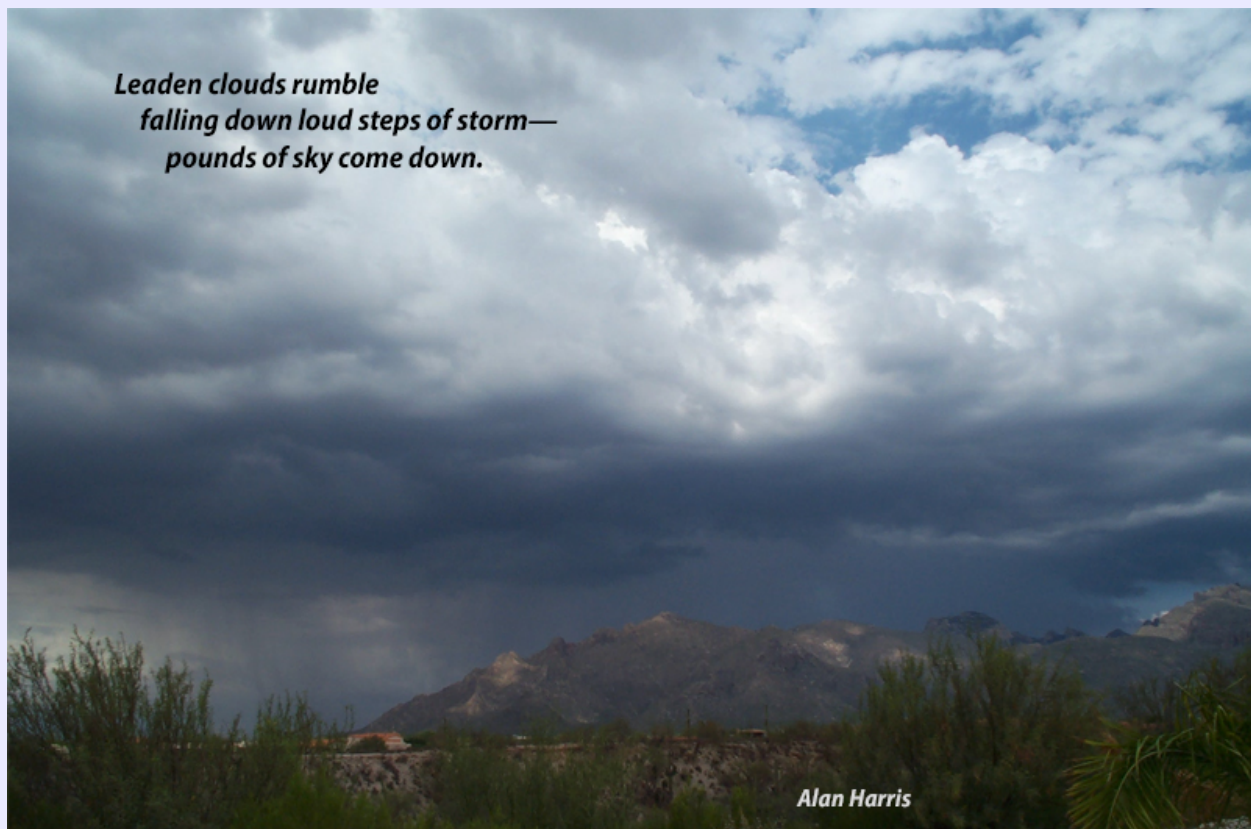


*All roads out are blocked  
by this rockslide in your mind?  
All roads in await.*

*Alan Harris*



*Leaden clouds rumble  
falling down loud steps of storm—  
pounds of sky come down.*



*Alan Harris*





*Opening their hearts  
roses suggest a Beyond  
to the inner eye.*

*Alan Harris*

The End