

IN SPIRITU



Poetry from the Hermitage

Big Sur, California

by

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I n S p r i t u

B y

J e a n M . H a r r i s

Published 2006
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D E D I C A T I O N

To Fathers Bruno and Isaiah
and the other wise and caring monks
at The Hermitage.

And to John, who understands poetry.

P R E F A C E

All my life I have loved driving along the curves of Highway 1, camping in Big Sur, and exploring Redwood country. It was some twenty years ago that a friend took me up to the New Camaldoli Hermitage for a week of rest. My husband of forty years had died suddenly, and rather than take the time to mourn and heal, I had just become very busy for a year. My friend, Ingrid, thought I needed the tranquility of a quiet, undemanding place to properly grieve for the man who had meant so much to me. She was right.

At the Hermitage, I walked the soft paths, listened to the bells and sensed the wisdom of the monks. I watched the sunsets, answered the bells, felt serene. Since then, I have returned several times each year to the Hermitage. At first, I wondered how to fill the days and took lots of books to read. I soon learned that it takes at least three days to unwind, to begin to use all your senses, to appreciate the sights, sounds, scents, and tastes of nature.

In the beginning, I would go down the mountain to Esalen, for a massage, or a lunch out, or a sugar fix. But eventually I accepted the simple beauty of tranquil setting just outside my cabin door. I soon learned to take nothing with me but a journal, a book or two, and some quiet music.

After a few visits, I became acquainted with individual monks, postulants, and priests. The residents observe silence everywhere at Hermitage, except in the bookstore and on roadways.

In this quiet, we become acutely aware of the sounds of nature, and each other's smiles. We are a thousand feet above the ocean, and fog sometimes separates us from the world below. But no matter the weather – sunny, misty or rainy – each day is a new experience. The tension and worry that we arrived with just melts away.

In the early days, I was blessed with the vigor to hike on the mountain above the dwellings and explore the steepest trails. This was a wonderful part of the Hermitage experience, and I came to greet each curve of the trail and view of the sea like an old friend. With each visit, I returned eagerly to explore the shores of the lake, to walk paths that took me above the tops of redwood trees past secret streams that could only be heard whispering below.

In later years, I became content to walk the winding paved road. It too, looks upon lovely views of the curving coastline, and the sea in all its moods. While walking, one can happen upon deer, rabbits, raccoons, birds, and tiny foxes, all unafraid of the passing visitor. I no longer feel the restless need to leave Hermitage and visit busier places nearby. I feel welcome and accepted just for who I am. Hermitage is a place to say, "Freeze these moments, in my soul – to bring forth in lesser days."

JH - 2006

C o n t e n t s

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Part One

Anticipation

Most of the trip passed in a daze.
Until the car began climbing,
following the sinuous curves,
up to the Big Sur cliffs.

Looking down on the crashing sea,
Each mile brings me closer,
and my excitement grows,
Soon to rest in the peace, the beauty,
the serenity of Hermitage!



How do I know a wind is coming?
The leaves are bouncing,
The sea is rippling,
And now I see popcorn on the waves.



Oh, that I could dance
like the fig leaves on the tree.



I know I'm part of a giant web.
My life is a circular spiral,
up and down...



Unwinding at the Hermitage

Too long, I've needed this special place
of beauty and nature and quiet.

No pressures here,

No expectations.

Given time, we unwind the
"raveled sleeves of care".

Each day is different,
all bright and clear,
or misty, isolated above the clouds.

As small rituals develop,
the deep bell calls,
and favorite trails are traveled.

Sunset and evening star,
from patio or promontory,
we watch from miles above the sea.

Gingerly, I move down the steep bank,
soft underfoot the fallen leaves.
But my timid feet seek solid stone.
an anchor,
substantial,
safe.

03

Loss

I am desolate, but must keep my body moving,
a lonely ship, ghosting between the trees.
Aimless, my eyes rest on a mighty pine.

Nearer, I see two trunks rise from the base,
a pair, reaching together for the sun.
I need such side by side support,
but my partner is gone.



I stole into the darkened sanctuary,
when all were gone from meditation.
I sat on the bench and removed my poncho.
I took off my shoes and moved into
the very center of the octagon,
below the hanging cross.
Slowly, slowly I began Tai Chi movements.

A young man came and chose the bench beside me.
After awhile he went away,
as I continued looking at the scene.
I was calm enough to walk to my room
In slow, slow, steps.
And that night, I dreamed of
my husband... a rare event.

03

The Decision

Driving the curves,
one wrench of the wheel,
and over the cliff.

Hiking the trails,
one slip of the foot,
and tumbling down.

Climb on the rock,
wet and slippery,
so easy... so quick.

Shall I?



Learn from the trees
about death and birth,
even about immortality.



Growth

When Brother David's mother died,
some years back,
he planted a silver dollar eucalyptus tree for her.
It was six feet tall.

It took a spurt this year,
like an adolescent,
and now towers,
outlined against the sky.

I, too, must reach above.



What about the future?
I want serenity, yes.
But with some zip and purpose.
Life gets in the way.



As the sun goes down
the amber roundness silently sinks
through a copper band.



Come Walk with Me

Come walk with me.

We must see the clouds and the sea,
down the steep and winding road.

Let's try for the third big curve,
where the in-bound sea is turquoise.

Remember, in a colder season,
we saw the whales from here?

But now it's May and very warm.

We hug the bank,
find cool in shade,
better to see the flowers.

These colors would drive Van Gogh wild again.
Brancusi would love the shapes of leaves.

Come walk with me.



The coast curves
and sometimes mist
travels up the canyons
from the sea.



Every day's a good day here,
but I have to say, this time,
that seeing the sun each morning
is a special gift.

To the god of my spiritual life,
I give thanks.



My Mother before Me

She raised her arm to point toward the scene.
Her skin, withered, hung from bone
and wrinkles mirrored emotions past.

I looked into her eyes and saw
innocence looking back at me.
She'd kept the best -
the searching joy,
open to the world - and free.
Now it is my turn to age
with love and joy and innocence intact.



I found myself talking to the moon tonight,
"Hey, you're almost full, aren't you?"



I fierce wind blew my cap off today.
It rolled down the hill,
and settled beneath a redwood tree.



Yellow, gold and green,
a hawk is drifting overhead.
I am growing wings to fly,
to fly.



Two Wise Men

At the Hermitage
many questions are asked,
and many answered.
One question: what is grace?
as in the song, "Amazing Grace?"

Father John called it a gift,
unexpected and unasked for.
"Grace," he said, "is a word we use
to talk about the experience
of God in our lives.
It is an active force,
working *in* us and *with* us
in our process of growth and
transformation into God-likeness,
which is selfless love."

I asked again about the Holy Spirit,
as in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Father Raniero said, "The Holy Spirit is
the motivating spirit within us
which moves us to action,
which brings purpose to our lives
and to the lives of others."

I pondered the words of these wise men,
as I walked the paths of Hermitage,
moved by the Grace and Spirit
within my soul.



The Mountain

Every part of the mountain
is sacred to me,
each grassy meadow,
each rounded pebble on the path,
green or gray or marbled.

The smooth blue of the lake,
and the frogs that leap,
each in turn,
as we walk its edge.

The trees and clouds
reflect upon its surface.
The colors of the wild flowers -
orange, yellow, pale blue, and white,
nodding in the breeze.
All are precious.

The march of redwoods,
down the canyon to the stream.
Hear it gurgle,
as it travels in slow path to the sea.

Hawks soar,
lifted on the rise of pressure.
And jays - so colorful to see,
so raucous to hear.
Each one is holy.



The sycamores are coming alive,
each leaf perfect.
How soft their undersides.
I lie on soft mulch
under a spicy smelling pine,
and note how the sun
turns each needle tip to silver,
Their cones hold new life in each tiny fold.
Each is special.

Higher and higher we climb.
Far below, the sea continues
its relentless pounding on the rocks.

Above, the bright, warm sun,
beams down on the mountain,
warming our very souls.



You stray from the path.
There is poison oak...
But oh, how warm the red!



It was a knockout sunset,
with huge rolling clouds,
lit from behind.



Seeking peace, look within,
Seeking hope, look within,
while cradled in ritual
and the beauty of the earth.



When Breath was Taken

It was a beautiful day
The sea was calm
The sun shone on the mountain.
I'll take the steeper trail today.

But I found myself stopping to catch my breath
Where ever the path leveled.
It took longer and longer to begin again.
Where was my energy, my zest for the journey?

Memories of the day my husband died
flashed before my eyes, again and again.
Ed died suffocating. His lungs filled with fluid
until his heart failed.

I came home from a meeting that night,
to a house that was just too quiet,
Even when I called for him.

Upstairs, where we slept, I found him,
lying on the floor, so still, so vulnerable.
Frantically, I covered his mouth with mine,
breathing in and out,
and thrusting my palm against his chest.

At last, exhausted, I sat back on my heels.
My lips burning from the effort.

From his mouth came a tiny sigh,
returning my final gift to him.

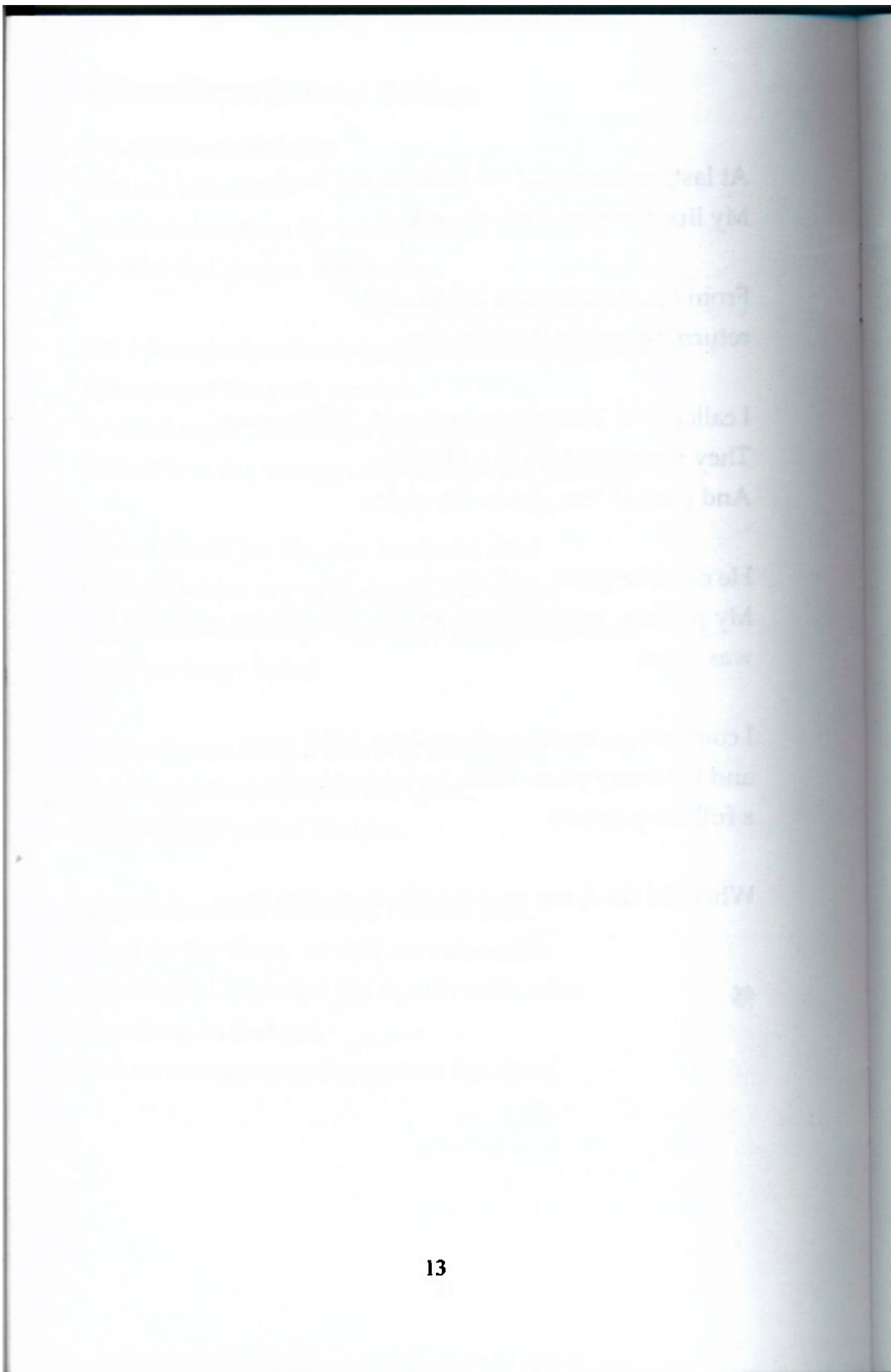
I called 911. They came and said, "He's gone."
They wrapped him in a blanket.
And carried him down the stairs.

He can't be gone... oh, no.
My partner, my lover, my man... since were sixteen,
was gone.

I couldn't go upstairs alone for a solid year,
and for many years after, I could not take
a full deep breath.

When Ed died, my zest for life died with him.





Part Two

In the Spirit

He sits in his cell as in paradise.
She lies beneath the tree.

His chair is hard as stone.
Her bed is soft pine needles.

His incense smells of sandalwood,
while the sea freshens her day.

He sings the ancient chants.
She finds comfort in his faith.

He takes the wafer on his tongue,
as she spreads crumbs for wild things.

Both know God.



Deep voices raised
in ritual song.
Words are lost,
the feeling strong.
Music carries me along.
Sunlight touches heads and robes.
Incense floats on patterned wood,
opens minds and spirit,
to freedom, truth and good.
This is but prelude.



It's All Wonderous

Six days of hot sun,
blue blue skies,
and stupefying sunsets.
Then - morning mist
and lovely showers.

Now we feast on other senses.
Rain on the leaves of outstretched branches,
and the damp smell of needles.

Lift your face for the touch of raindrops.



When I was a kid,
We admired the tallest, strongest boy.
And now,
one tree rises above the rest.
Below, the bark is red
And when we sniff into the cracks –
it's caramel butterscotch.
Jasper Pine!



The fig tree in my patio
is bursting with fruit.
Fill the big bowl
to share with everyone.



Stay Open

Today, I was open to the world,
every sense attuned.

Smell of sage and eucalyptus,
blue and turquoise of sky and sea.
Sharp tang and juice of my red apple.
Softness of cotton on my thighs.

This is the trick of healing -
Stay open... let it happen.



Oh, light the spice of incense.
Breathe slowly and very deep.
Toss back your heavy head.
Anticipating bliss.

CS

You don't remember days.
It's moments that last.

CS

Down the Hill

The sky so blue,
one *must* breathe deep
to purify the soul
The trees so green,
and greener still
the newest tips of needle pine.

The sea is turquoise near the rocks,
where it curls to white.

Underfoot,
softness of moss,
crunch of fine gravel,
springy smooth asphalt.

The crisp morning
warmed in the sun,
a day to fly.
Soar like the hawk.
Swoop like the gull.
October in Big Sur.



Suddenly, a fierce wind
rushed through the pines.
I snuggled deeper in my
warm hollow.

CS

Ascent

I climb the mountain,
and it's cold this early.
But I'm searching the sea for whales,
and each splash of white
brings a stir of hope.

Soon the cold gives way to warmth.
The sun glints on yellow and violet,
as my feet scatter dry oak leaves.

My partner has been gone six years.
No longer do I remember him each day.
This cold, too, gives way to warmth.

Another phase is coming



When a man dies, and it seems too soon,
we seek the reason and find no answer.
Circle of the cosmos, reveal yourself.



Suddenly, a cold wind
rushed through the pines.
I snuggled deeper in my warm hollow.



Closer Still

We walked the soft path
down to the foot of the canyon,
and found a wooden bridge.
It crossed the restless river
which, in ages past,
had carved that very canyon.

Looking over the side,
challenged,
I must go down to the water.
"You'll be eighty years old in May," she said.
"It's dangerous to climb down."

But I scooted on my jeans,
over soft dirt, fallen logs, and granite cascade,
to a fine flat slab warmed by the sun.

I dangle a finger in the cold water.
The small water spider moves.
The surface ripples in circles and swirls.

Gazing up to the sweet-smelling pines,
silhouetted against sky and tumbling clouds,
I am in Heaven!

Closing my eyes, breathing slowly,
I listen to forest and water's murmur.

Much later I'll think about climbing back up to the path.



The Frame

It was a lovely view,
leaving me untouched.
I strolled, enjoying the warm sun,
The breeze gently blowing pampas feathers.
The soft tan hills captured the light
green and bronze conifers caught flame
Still, it was simply pleasant.

And then I gazed from the chapel window.
Framed through a hexagon of wood,
the same scene,
breathtaking, arresting, stupendous!



Who am I?
At 83, I ought to know.
Maybe I'm not there yet...
I'm just working on it.

03

Each tip - a bright, bright green,
springing from the darker branch.
Run your curled palm from trunk to tip
Feel the change,
Dark is stiff, bright is soft.
Life is growth.

03

I Can Do Anything

I can do anything, I can do nothing,
I can read, I can write,
I can think, I can draw.
It's all my time!

I can pick up colorful stones
and examine a flower.
If I get lonesome,
and want to talk a bit,
I can go to the bookstore
to see which monk is there.

I can even ask Father Bruno
to take a walk on the road.
The bell calls for vespers.
I can join them if I wish
and listen to their ancient chants

It's all my time!



If the path narrows,
simply turn your shoulders,
and move on.



It takes at least three days up here
for the mind to still its racing.
Only then can I
hear the silence,
smell the incense,
and see - really see - the stars.
Experience awe.



Storm

Conifers marched up the mountain from the sea,
vulnerable.

Lightning flashed and flames leaped from tree to tree,
as waves crashed on rocky shore.

Fire, carried by the wind, spared some,
but some were seared and others blackened.
Their life resin bubbled and dead.

Today we see green life again.

New needles bristle in clusters along redwood trunks
reaching for the sky.

Unknowing, uncaring, invulnerable... the sea rolls on.



I paused beneath the canopy of lilac
and was quiet for awhile.
A chirp, a soft sound,
rustle, dart on the dry leaves.
Birds cross the path in single file.
I'm surrounded by dry rustles,
at one with the quail.



Nestled in the twisted
and burned branches,
see bright orange and
yellow flowers.



I Remember

In the years since
Ingrid brought me here,
my sorrow has subsided.
I had a sign of that today.

For years, as I walked the mountain,
I chanted, "Listen, listen, listen to my heart song.
I will never forget you; I will never forsake you."

But today, at the lake,
I found a crawdad's claw on the shore,
and found myself singing,
"You get a line, I'll get a pole, honey..."



"You get a line, I'll get a pole, honey,
You get a line, I'll get a pole, baby,
You get a line, I'll get a pole,
We'll go down to the crawdad hole
Honey baby of mine."
- Traditional

Part Three

Beyond Belief

A light rain had continued for several days.
Fog isolated us from the world below.
No matter the weather,
today I needed to stir my bones.

So I put on my poncho
and my big canvas hat,
and slowly began the trail
upward on the mountain.

On two year's visits
I'd tried to locate the waterfalls.
They were beautiful,
and I wanted to enjoy them again.
I'll do some exploring off the trail today!

After an hour or so of climbing,
sensing I was close -
I left the path and moved into the trees.

But the drizzle turned to driving rain,
and I sought the protection of a big oak tree.
Sitting against the trunk,
I realized I was lost - really lost.
Where is the trail?
Where, even, is the ocean?
What was up, and what was down?

When the hard rain subsided,
I remained frozen in place.
Afraid to move, petrified.
Suddenly, out of the dense fog,
I heard a voice - familiar from the Ojai talks -
in his unmistakable accent.

Awake
It was Krishnamurti.
The voice of the spiritual philosopher
I knew so well.

He said with rare authority, "Get up, keep moving, and
you will find the path."

In a daze, I followed his instructions,
and soon stumbled upon a three foot drop.
Would that be the trail below?
Gingerly I made my way down.
It *was* the path, all right.
but which way should I turn?

I couldn't tell left from right in the fog.
But moving along a wide curve,
I heard the tolling of the chapel bell below.

At vespers we can each voice a prayer.
That evening, mine was, "I wish to give thanks to
Krishnamurti. He gave me the courage to move on".
And the monks responded, "Thanks be to God."

Service completed, Father Robert took me aside,
and asked me, "Had you heard that Krishnamurti died
today?"

Therin lies the mystery.
I hadn't hear the sad news
But I *knew* I heard his voice on the mountain,
And it gave me a rule to live by:
"get up, keep moving, and you will find the path".



Oh, to Breathe Again

One evening, I was restless.
I stepped out to visit the stars,
curling my toes around
the weathered wooden stoop.

Faithful Orion was waiting for me –
All sprawled on his side,
But no sign of Sirius of following behind.

Instead, a sparkling collection of green,
And nearby, a tipped-over waxing moon,

The night was still and silent.
The clouds had blown away.
A falling star streaked across the sky,
and then another.

In awe, gazing into the glory of the heavens,
I drew long deep wonderful breaths
Over and over and over again.

Ever since my husband died,
his lungs filled with fluid,
I too, unconsciously, suffered lessened breath.
Breath - so necessary for energy, action and joi-de-vivre.

But tonight, inspired,
Life had broken through!



Awake at 2 AM

In the silence of Big Sur night
My feet crunch gravel on the drive.

'Round the sentinel cypress I go
to see their silhouette against the sky.
In and out – bright light to shadowed dark.

Orion lies high over the mountain,
and below, the moon's shining silver path
stretches from shoreline to sea's horizon.

The planet turns unheeding, relentless, majestic.
How insignificant our tumbled thoughts!



The wind has gone,
and the night sky shows
a crescent moon
and millions,
and billions of stars.



Just think
Each star is a SUN
and the Universe is endless....



Logos

What do you do
when your time is your own,
in a lovely place
high over the sea?

You have your own room,
no ringing phone,
no blaring TV news.

Someone cooks your simple food
and brings it to you.
Peel an orange slowly,
eat mindfully.

Once settled in,
you can watch a vapor trail,
slanting across the sky.
From so high, there is no sound.

You can pick a few wild flowers
and choose music
to fit your mood.
You can change to your pajamas
as early as you want.
Do Tai Chi on the wooden porch at sunset,
to the sound of birds.

You can rig up a lamp
to read in bed,
and hang bright scarves
against the walls.
Breathe very slowly.

I find myself looking idly
out the wall of windows –
Just letting my thoughts wander
and soon there are no thoughts at all!

The clouds move slowly
across the blue.
A slight breeze sways the pampas.

Out back, from my bed,
I can see bushes of flowers.
And once, three deer passed by.
One by one, they stopped,
with cupped ears, alert.
Gazing thoughtfully,
In a moment,
moving on.

The green mountain climbs above.
If I hike those trails,
I'll smell the redwoods,
and find a lake.
I can walk on fallen needles,
and see sunlight change the
color of leaves



Sound the trumpets!
Roll those drums!
Brighten the sky with sparkling lights!
It's my turn to stay in Logos!



Cleaning Day in Logos

I got into a whirl of energy this afternoon
It began with hosing down
my pine-needle covered car.

Then I sprayed everything,
the purple flowered vine
the cacti on the deck
then the deck itself
the soft and faded planks

I found tiny white flowers to water,
and others whose leaves look like strawberries.
I watered the sprouting grass,
and rolled up the new green hose.

Then I swept the trailer,
stem to stern,
shook the rugs and left them over the rail,
in the bright warm sun.



Another day,
the rain washed my car
and a south wind swept my porch.
I sat back and beamed.

CS

What's a Poet to Do?

What's a poet to do?
The best, just right, adjectives
have been used.

Like pesky flies
plaintive cries
countless stars
restless Mars
gentle breeze
startling sneeze

And the best verbs, too,
they've been used,
ocean roars
eagle soars
butterfly flutters
old man mutters.

But think, except for sharps and flats,
eight notes are all musicians have!



Breezes rising into wind.
First the ferns, and then
The tall pines begin to sway.
Swish – h – h – h.



The Deer

This must be my lucky day.
I awoke early.
inside, I sat down for a warm drink,
and three young does, one by one,
came into my small patio,
overlooking the ocean.

Large ears, held high, alert, but unafraid.
With munching jaws, they denuded the lowest branches
of the fig tree and a green bush under my window.

One looked me straight in the eye – for a few seconds,
separated only by a pane of glass.

The next morning
they're all gone, but somehow,
they're still here.



I'd forgotten hawks are silent.
Concentrating on their prey,
I suppose.



Her ears were cupped in our direction.
Soft eyes alert.
With ease, she presented her profile,
then, with a flick of tail,
crossed our path,
assured.



The Ties That Bind

My warm jacket comforts in the morning chill.
I'll take the lower path today.
Early, the birds will be busy
in the redwood forest.
I'll make my way through the high bushes,
to the place of large rocks,
piled helter-skelter,
as if hurled by giant gods in battle.

If I'm lucky the deer will be there,
lifting their heads, unafraid.
I know the log I'll rest upon,
feel its rough bark under my shoulders.
Watch a lone vapor trail
move across the blue, blue sky.

Warm now,
time to take off my jacket.
Tie the sleeves around my waist,
and begin the steep way downward.

I should watch the path for rocks,
but my eyes look out to sea.
One small sloop is tacking northward
against the wind.

I hear the bells begin to chime,
calling us to gather,
I untie my jacket, take a quick drink,
and smooth my hair.
Sitting in the cool chapel
I can still feel the tightness 'round my waist
where my sleeves were tied.

Remembering the morning,
listening to the chants.



Symphonies

The sounds of the stream are varied,
a bubble, a swish, gurgle and thonk,
a tinkle, a hiss, a burgle and glink.

Each fall, so different,
each stone, changing the notes.
Together they make a chorus.

The actions of folks are varied, too...
a smile, a snarl, chuckle and frown,
a hug, a kiss, rejection, and clown.
Each person so different.

Each of our days brings change.
Together, they make a symphony.



I believe in
circles and spirals.
But what about webs?



My daughter brought me white
and yellow jonquils
and arranged them with care.
Now my whole room smells so
sweet.



Awareness

Above and below,
I hear the gurgle and tumble of the stream.
But right here, on these level stones – look.
The tree reflect in shallow pools,
where the water quiets.

And now,
as the tiny water spider moves,
the surface ripples in circles and swirls.

An observer no longer simply sees,
but becomes the stream, the stones, the spider and the trees.



Say “hello” to the trees.
Say “hello” to the stones
Walk right up and *be* each one.



I want to write about
experiencing slow Tai Chi
on a wooden porch.



When you’ve lived for days in Nature’s beauty,
noticing each leaf and silhouette,
steeped in sunset,
and walked the Milky Way,
at home your eyes are opened, too.



Colors

I'm partial to blue now,
for skies and eyes,
for lakes and oceans.

The blue jay's wing
puts my heart in motion.

I'm partial to blue now.



Yellow, gold and green below,
a hawk is drifting overhead.
I am growing wings to fly,
to fly.



Count the endless colors of green.
One, two, three...



Listen to the wind,
as it tosses the tips of slender trees,
rattles the leaves of the great oaks,
and the dry leaves of the pampas,
and sighs through the redwoods.
Listen to the wind's touch.



Therese

Therese has a magic window
It looks out at huge sycamores
All bronze and rust this autumn.

If you wait long enough,
a single leaf comes floating down,
dancing down.

When you're especially lucky,
the breeze creates a cascade of tumbling color!
tan... copper... yellow...
The waiting is pleasant too...



Eric

Today I played with Eric's swing,
a wonderful invention.
Its long, long lines hang from the first branch
of a tall redwood tree.

I knew the ropes were strong,
and I pushed out over the cliff's edge.
to hear the bubbling water below.

Swing back, and all is quiet.
Thrust outward again, hear the rushing stream,
Back, forth, back, forth...

Now, try twisting ten times around,
Throw your head back and watch the sky unwind.
In the swing, you are free.



The Lesson

We were drawn to the sound of moving water.
Syncopation tumbled over the rounded stones,
leaped over fallen trunks,
bubbled forth in brightness.

Round the bend, the water slowed...
Now we can see reflections.
Trees, mountains, granite blocks.

We learn from Mother Nature,
to mirror the stream.
Only when we pause to reflect,
can wisdom penetrate our harried pace.



The second curve
is one mile down the road.
But my favorite place is the first turn.
You hear the surf there,
and much of the sea is turquoise -
and sometimes jade.
The coast swings in and out,
and mist travels up the canyons.

CS

Slow Sunset Hour

The sun had just gone
when we stopped to watch the show.
For more than an hour,
magic shone above the sea.
Could orange be brighter?
Or peach riper?
Yes! Brighter when all glowed
red, crimson and bronze.
And look! That patch turned briefly green!

Then - suddenly - it was dark.
The show's over folks!
May there be clouds tomorrow,
to highlight nature's brush.



Traveler

Venture out into the Milky Way.
Merge with the Universe.
Dart among whirling, sparkling suns,
like a humming bird,
touching flower to bright flower.
One with time and space,
endless...
breathless...



In Bright Sun

Blue is silver,
green is yellow,
the spider's line is bronze.
The snail's trail
turns to pearl,
white clouds change to pink.

The rock is cold and hard
beneath my back.
Above the leaves so soft
glisten in the filtering sun.
A leaf falls free,
twisting in the changing light,
and settles near my hair.



When you think about smells,
remember sage and mint.
When you think about sounds,
remember silences.

63

Oh, No!

We leave tomorrow morning,
So I sit here eating
childhood comfort foods tonight.
Shredded wheat with hot milk,
peanut butter on warm toast,
and Postum.



I'm not sure what love is.
Commitment, affection,
nurturing, caring, cuddling,
joy and excitement?

I'm not sure what love is,
but I sure know how it feels!



Be Still

If you are very still for a long while
living creatures appear.
The chipmunk,
whose tail is red underneath,
The quail family crosses the road,
The cottontail twitches his nose.



Here, the lizards all have their tails.



Last Day

Today is my last full day.
The familiar regret and sadness
finds me soaking in the warm sun.

Noticing the quiet,
the moving Pampas,
the sheen on the ocean.

Anticipating the last sunset - oh, my...
Freeze this moment in my mind
to retrieve in lesser times!



There's a spirit in this place...
Great God Almighty,
There's a Spirit in this place!
03



St. Romuald's Brief Rule For Camaldolese Monks

Sit in your cell as in paradise.
Put the whole world behind you and forget it.
Watch your thoughts like a good fisherman
watching for fish.

The path you must follow
is in the Psalms - never leave it.

If you have just come to the monastery,
and in spite of your good will
you cannot accomplish what you want,
take every opportunity you can
to sing the Psalms in your heart
and to understand them with your mind.

And if your mind wanders as you read, do not give up;
hurry back and apply your mind to the words once more.
Realize above all that you are in God's presence,
and stand there with the attitude of one who stands
before the emperor.

Empty yourself completely and sit waiting,
content with the grace of God,
like the chick who tastes nothing and eats nothing
but what his mother brings him.

Reprinted courtesy of the Hermitage
Cover art by Br. Laurence