

"Ho, Ho", Said the Platypus
and Other Snappy Titles



Poems by David M. Schwartz

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3rd Edition

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Also by David M. Schwartz:

5/8 of Everything I've Written Amber Waves of Nausea A

Pickle for Bernice

Hey! I Just Write This Stuff

Winter Poems

Dedicated to my family and friends, who have inspired and supported me in all my endeavors. Rather than risk offending some of you by only mentioning a few names, I'll risk offending all of you by mentioning none. The purpose of this book is to have fun, enjoy my work, and think a little. Do not analyze my work for hidden meanings. Believe me, it does not work. Do not take the religious poems too seriously either, but do not ignore them just the same. Please do not read this booklet in the bathroom as it includes G-d's name.

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Section I January 1982 through August 1984

Sunset

Spread across the sky,
shot by the bullet of time.
Receiving the wound,
laying down to rest.
With a bright skull fading into the grave
for a final rest.

January 12, 1982

Goodbye, Clyde

Once upon a time, I found a counterfeit dime.
It ran from me, I cried.
As it left, it said, "Good bye, Clyde."

Well, I was a lad torn to bits.
I lost everything including my wits. My parents thought I
was simply mad. Boy, oh boy I was so sad.

My folk now think I'm fickle because I found a nickel
I forgot that ten cent piece, and lost the nickel in some cooking grease.

Once upon another time, I found another fake dime. It ran from me,
again I cried. And as it left, it ironically said, "Goodbye, Clyde."

July 11, 1982

The Furnace

Psst! Hear my whistles.
See the steam and come here.
Sit down on my back for a ride.

Don't be afraid, I won't hurt.
I just like to make silly noises.
Screech! Ha-ha! nothing to worry about.

There we go. Sit down, that's all Relax.
I won't bite or will I?

February 24, 1983

Can't Go Back to Being Children

Chorus: We can't go back to being children, Still we can listen to their song.
How'd we grow and when did it happen? Weren't we really growing all along?

If you go to a park on a sunny day,
watch the young as they play.
Their minds are clear and they're innocent.
Be careful of what you teach and how their time is spent.

Growing up is painful, remembering can be cruel listening to teachers and their rules.
Children's smiles are simple and their eyes are wise.
We must not ignore why the child cries.
(Chorus)

The child asks when daddy will come home. She's
a young women who'll marry a young man, then
their children will also roam.

So what's the child's lament? What message has been sent?
Do they want a hand to hold or to know what it to be old?

There's something we should've found.
Days and months become seasons, excuses reasons.
Life's a circle and merry-go-round. (Chorus)

April 24, 1983

People Are Starvin' in the Promised Land

People are starvin' in the Promised Land. Some are fastin', tryin to lend a hand.
The government spends no money In the land of milk an honey.
People are starvin' in the Promised Land.

People are prayin' in the United States. In the hot summer no humidity abates.
In a landfill there's some cheese. The people send their pleas. People are prayin'
in the United States.

Our leaders destroy what the poor need. Wastin' out of ignorance an greed.
They only listen when it's time to vote
an won't get support from folks in ragged coats.
Our leaders destroy what the poor need.

Many will die in this season riskin' their lives for good reason
beggin' senators for some aid.
Unless they are helped, to rest they'll be laid.
Many will die in this season
as people keep starvin' in the Promised Land.

July 23, 1983

Old Man's Time Is Gone

Now the sun sets as the old pages start to crinkle.
How fast the time went when we were so young.
There are our proud parents.
Can I keep from crying?
My wife of thirty-five years gone and children married. I'm alone after thirty-five years.
Now what do I have?
Rent to pay, no work to do and nowhere to go, but to my wife.
I guess it comes to another forgotten life,
another unvisited stone.
No more worries, just rest, some child will take my place.
The note is left and the house is locked and it'll be over soon and I'll join her.

October 11, 1983

Shabbat Shalom

Chorus:

Shabbat Shalom Shabbat Shalom
All good people wherever you are Shabbat Shalom

The sun has descended, the troubles are past
Our work has ended, Shabbat at last, at last (Chorus)

Everyone's ready for the Shabbat meal, after we pray Gladness is all that we can feel,
and there's only one phrase one can say,
one can say... (Chorus)

Shabbat Shalom May 10, 1984

Sweet Child

It's all right the storm is over.
There's no reason for your tears.
Cuddle up and go to sleep, hold your doll beside you.

All you need is a dream to take you away from here. Give the world a smile. Sweet
dreams, sweet child.

Good night. Shut your eyes,
rest your head and dream peacefully.
Tomorrow you will rise and greet the morning sun. Sweet Dreams, sweet child.

May 10, 1984

Modeh Ani

"I give thanks to You, Living and existing King, that returned my breath (soul) unto me with
much compassion (pity) and faithfulness." Jewish Liturgy

When I arise from sleep to greet the new morning
my voice shall rise up to the clouds
with a song of thanks, a song of praise.
I thank G-d for the past night's rest,
for morning sun, and evening moon,
and the children's smiles as they play in the afternoon.
Modeh ani, modeh ani lifanecha melech chai v'chayam shehechezarta bi, shehechezarta bi
nishmati bechemla
rabba emunatecha rabba emunatecha rabba emunatecha

July 25, 1984

Amar Rabi Chanina Ben Dosa

Pirke Avot (Ethics of The Fathers) 3:12

Amar, Amar, Amar, Ama-a.ar, Amar Rabi Chanina Ben Dosa Amar, Amar,
Amar, Ama-a-ar, Amar Rabi Chanina Ben Dosa

If our learning shall exceed our deeds,
then it shall not prevail, but if our deeds shall prevail then it shall
endure forever (and ever!)

August 14, 1984

Section II September 1984 through August 1985

Poultry

Fresh flesh laying on the table, unclothed and uncleaned A little blood
seeps from the underside.

It was no spring chicken.

Instead, it was hunted down like and imprisoned bear, But it might
make a nice rug.

September 5, 1985

Ogre the Otter

Ogre the otter hated himself and he wished he were another.

"Ugly and dumb", the other otters called him, yet he had a
sense of the smarts.

His daddy became an inkblotter
and his mom sits stuffed upon a shelf.

Ogre almost became soup,
but he didn't want to become a coat worn by a bum.

That is why he got a job working for beavers.

The others thought him stupid, "Without redeeming worth"

But he made sick animals laugh,
and he thought himself a cool cat, or
at least not a bull of a dog.

Then one day into the lake he slid,
to save a penguin's hide.

The victim revived, Ogre died,
and the others praised him after that...

but there's still no "Claymation" special about him.

September 6, 1984

Sunrise

Sunrise is the continual birth of flowers,
no matter where in the world it occurs.
even in winter, while babies are silently growing,
the flowers are fast asleep.
i pity the blind who can't see the morning,
the deaf who can't hear the birds chirping
and i thank G-d for sunsets since they bring new dawns.

September 8, 1984

Sunset no. 2

Spread across the sky,
shot by the bullet of time.
It receives the impact, laying down to rest
as gray wisps of hair fly gently into a blue graveyard
But now a bright skull fades into
the grave
for a final rest.

November 9, 1984

Testament

I think it's late November.
Most of the neighbors are moving away.. .or dead. The houses are without power
and water.
We forgot what showers were like or when we last flushed
We've no courage to end it
because our beliefs are strong. There's hope for a rainbow, or a sign to go home. Before I
sleep I'll pray and light a candle
for my family and home in the dust.

November 28, 1984

Paper Wings

When you were young, you wished you could fly higher than earth, run farther
than the truth
doing everything in your youth as if tomorrow you'd die

Each day was a world of knights and swords, dreams and words flowing from your mind, in a
dream land you wanted to find

When you started school you met other girls and boys.
You didn't see eye-to-eye because they never asked "why?" and you never let them share
your toys.

The teacher told your parents how you'd never fit in, how you let your head run wild;
you could never win in today's world, child.

When all the others were playing make-believe games You couldn't act the same, you
stopped being free.

It wasn't you that you wanted to be.

It's time to fly as far as you can to
find those knights and kings, so put
back on those paper wings.
You must be a child, before you can learn to be a man.

March 25, 1985

Section III October 1985 through August 1986

Jerusalem

Your gold shines in my eyes, but not enough to blind
Your radiance shines through me, always overflowing as I've walked from new to old
and back again.

I'm never changed though I've traveled streets, rock, sand I only want you,
yearning each day to return.

October 9, 1985

Khizri Lishon (Return to Sleep)

Shh.. .Khizri lishon, y'hiyeh b'seder.

Chalom ra shalach avar.

Aht lo holechet l'moot achshav, ahz lo tz'richah l'fachehd,
lo tz'richah l'fachehd.

Khetzi chalomotayich y'hiyu rahyim,
aval chetzi y'hiyu tovim me'od.

Khizri lishon, khizri lishon. Aht lo mucrachah l'da'ag.

Shh.. . Return to sleep, it will be alright.

Your bad dream is passed. You aren't going to die now,
So you needn't be afraid, you needn't be afraid.

Half of your dreams will be bad.

but half will be very good.

Return to sleep, return to sleep. You must not worry.

December 15, 1985

Zichron LaShoah

Im Ani yoshev o yoshen,

yeladim sheli y'hiyu li c'mo hamehtim. Lo nishar zeman,
yedidi, lo nishar zeman.

Pa'am echad hayiti po, v'Ani yodeyah, she'ha-esh nitan l'hichzor
Ani tzarich l'hiyot muchan, Ani tzarich l'hiyot muchan. Hageshem
ba achshav. Ani lo poched. Aval hageshem lo ba l'civah et ha-esh.

If I sit or sleep, my children will be like the dead.

No more time remains, my friend, no more time remains

I was here before and I know the fire can come once more. I

have to be ready. I have to be ready.

The rain comes now. I am not afraid.

But the rain does not come to extinguish the fire.

December 17, 1985

Living Tomorrow Today

When it's time to go, when the last plane taxis out,
I can still see you pout.
We're traveling to different lands, having different plans
In the next seat, I could still feel you near, still keeping you dear.

I'll return home like a conqueror from the fields seeking refuge from the skies, needing
your safe shield from so many lies. Family- just a word left in the hall. As for friends,
would you still call?

Were you lying when you talked about "forever"?
Was it the moment and the mood?
You said things like "staying together"
Simply words meant to soothe.

The fire dies as we hold on tight.
Eyes still cry longer than the night.
And when it's time to go, there will be no parties left to throw.
I'll keep my thoughts at bay. I refuse to live tomorrow today.

Around February 12, 1986

More

I don't know where I'm going as I walk down the road. My mind which I carry is my
heavy load. And when my thoughts start flowing, you seem much closer to me.

You are my future. I have no past, nothing to be sorry for.
You can be sure my love will last as long as you give me more.

Chorus:

More of your freedom and another smile, more of your kind words too.
I'll write you a poem I'll play for you awhile.
I'll prove my love is true.

I don't have much rhyme, but a greater reason for writing this song today.
You'll be the sun and I'll be "Father Time". Life is just another game we
can play.

I still don't know where I'm going as I walk down the road.
Love is still scary, that you've shown and when our fears stop flowing,
you'll be much closer to me.
Just as long as you give me. .. (Chorus)

March 4, 1985

Moment of Doubt

G-d, please remember me. I believe, but I'm not sure why
Like others I have my doubts,
but tonight I'm afraid I'll die.
When sad times occur, I tremble,
forcing myself to stand tall.
Am I playing charades or affirming Your plan?
When happy times blow in, the world is like my ball. Can you catch it, G-d?
Can you catch me, G-d? Throughout my life, I thought I'd die without beliefs
and I couldn't explain me to you.
You're a two-edged knife, cutting down friends like leaves yet I believe Your
goodness is true.
Today there's nothing I can do.

March 29, 1986

Come Lie Beside Me

Chorus:

Come lie beside me, do not be afraid.
Come lie beside me, come lie here in the shade.

When I feel your arms around me this way,
it feels like an airplane ride.
And if you ever
take your love a-way, my heart will be torn open wide (Chorus)

Do not be scared, I will not take your heart. What have you to be
afraid for?
You can remain what you are.

Now I want you forever, just one day doesn't mean a damn
Our ties must never sever,
for you have made what I am, all that I am.
Help me stay the way that I am.

April 17, 1986

Love Around

If you lead me and take me to the gallows or
to your bed, it's all the same.
You could take my hand so I understand.
You make the rules and I'll play the game.

Chorus:

We're running, racing and chasing our love around.
Always groping and hoping a chance will come around.

I could write poetry or sing all day long,
it's all the same to me.
But if you aren't near and don't hear,
my words scare me and it's all wrong.

We could go walking, but where would we go?
All our dreaming and talking is very fine. Truth
sends needles up my spine,
but your heart I'll never know.

When I'm feeling down and can't go on, won't you stay?
Please take me away. Stay through the night, at least till
dawn and tell me how long will we be...

July 27, 1986

Section IV December 1986 through May 1988

farmer death

my world is falling down.
the clouds crumble as they crash
upon my shoulders upon my neck
and i feel the yoke of death
because the big old man is guiding me to trod and plow this earth.
oh my L-rd, i feel my dreams snap underneath my feet underneath the
aging sun
and before i'm done i'll have crossed the fields a
thousand times or more.
and the directions are lost, right and north and left and south are lost.
my grave will be in the center of the land
floating in the wheat not to be visited
not to be met again except by running children
playing in the autumn day
shouting with a leap over the fence posts
over the grave stone and over me.

October 14, 1986

July Now

As we sit beside the fireside I see flames in your eyes.
They quiver but never fail, just like your heart just like your love on this late December night.

Lay your head down and let me hear your voice.
Sing with me and my guitar, while hair flows down your shoulders.

Chorus: Being with you now is all I could hope for, so
open your arms wide and hold me close tonight.

"Quiet now", you said to me, "Let's forget about time.
Let me feel your kiss on my cheek, instead of talking. You
could've been mine so long ago, we wasted time." Then I
said, "Why be sorry when we can start anew?" (Chorus)

I wish it were July now as if we'd sing beneath the Milky Way
and later we'd go inside as the breeze blows through.
July has passed by my mind. Our love has died in my mind.
I wish it were July now, but our love is gone. Your face is gone from my mind. (Chorus)

December 25, 1986

Dreams Change

Now that I'm older, I can appreciate the boy I was. I
can laugh or cry or feel what I choose.
When I hear my friends call me, I'll be happy awhile.

Chorus:
Do dreams change or have I changed down the road to maturity? If
I'm different, then so are you.

I've never had a lover, but that's never stopped me. My
heart will wander as long as my feet do One day I'll find
someone and it might be you.

Do you remember teasing in school? Does it matter?
I've come back and you're here.
The laughs are gone, but us jokers remain.
While we're in our prime don't shed a tear. (Chorus)

So now you're thinking "Here we go again"
just one thing on my one track mind.
Neither of us can say we'd be better off if we never met.
Whether we're desolate is relative cause life won't wait.

Someone once said to me, "You're bound to grow old,

just look at those that have gone before."
But how can people stop growing? Why do dreams change?
There's nothing here to keep us growing. (Chorus)

February 25, 1987

Ta'azor Li Bevakehshah (Help Me Please)

Adonai, Adonai ta'azor li,
kee Ani boded v'Ani bocheh v'Ani tzarich chasdechah.
Ani ben esrim v'Ani lo yodeyah she'ha'olam lo sheli. V'Ani lo yodeyah im chayim sheli
chayim shelchah. Az efshar, lishmor alai?
Im Ani talmid shel hachayim, im Ani mitpalel col hazman, v'im Ani rak yelad shelchah, az
lamah lo?
Lamah lo ta'azor li bevakehshah?
Ani rotzeh l'da'at im mishehu shomeya achshav. Adonai, Adonai ta'azor li, kee Ani boded
v'Ani bocheh v'Ani tzarich chasdechah ad echzor l'malechutechah.
G-d, G-d help me, because I am alone and I'm crying and I need your kindness.
I am 20 years old and I don't know the world isn't mine. And I don't know if my life is Your
life.
Is it possible to watch over me?
If I'm a student of life, if I pray all the time,
and if I'm only Your child, so why not, why
not help me please?
I need to know if someone is listening now.
G-d, G-d help me, because I am alone and I'm crying and I need your kindness until I return to
Your kingdom.

March 10, 1987

Hole City August 19, 1987

My heart resides in a city of sand, stone, and blood.
Its dreams and fears are in children's faces and in their parents' before them.

Its walls are made of the wills of many who died for her gold.
Deep between the walls all one sees is what has past.

My legs could have climbed long ago to the Antonia or
Golgotha and could've leaned against a sacred wall.

It's been two years since I was there,
yet the vendor's cries still echo with a voice and bells
from a tower to a house of study blocks away.

I can't get the thought out of my head that two peoples tear at my heart.
Her heart will make their lives whole until they find another cause to kill for.
My dreams lay in a city of power, gold and hate. Dreams are buried in the sand beneath stone.

If They Forget Treblinka

A man walked from the, fire forty-two years ago.
He hoped to find his family on the road from hell.
Instead, he saw them in the smoke.
He rebuilt himself and another family
in a distant larger land.
His children avoid the heat, and say some prayers.
They remember the past once a year, saying "Never Again".
Sometimes the old man comes to visit.
He's happy for their lot, but wishes they weren't so spoiled. So
he asks: "How many times have I told you about..." They
reply: "Dad, that was a long time ago."
The kids shouldn't know death. It can't happen here."
He shakes his head, remembering the smokestacks.

December 5, 1987

dance

bass man snaps hard chords as joy rises inside me.
my body moves chopping air, in a spinning ecstasy, rolling curves exciting me. loud
feedback consumes me, hair flying as we land. i grasp her as we rise to our feet while lead
guitar seems to laugh at us. we laugh back.

February 7, 1988

Friendly Shadows

Smile for me. You are a quiet, smiling child. Shy? Maybe you're just reserved.
Smile when I see you, asking how you are,
inviting you for coffee.
We both know how nice the other is from afar, remaining politely distant in public. I'd
like to know you better, but it might hurt us both. So we remain friendly shadows,
acquaintances in coincidental meeting who don't talk.

February 20, 1988

Mike March 4, 1988 To the memory of Michael J. Conklin, 1967-88 I
can't praise or criticize you.
The world no longer binds you.
I wonder if you're looking laughing or cursing.
Writing, listening, driving around would not keep you here.
When my mom told me, I thought you'd shot yourself. But a
bubble popped in your head, a dream burst in me. I put on
twenty years you never had visiting your grandma. Any age is
too old to float away.

Wound

I live a self-inflicted wound,
inflicted for sideward mobility.
I don't want to regress, but to release pressure to do the best, be
the best, be rich, get ahead.
I trade my former goals for my turn to play the game. I
see friends panting trying to finish college quickly.
Who'll take longer? To be what?
Everyone is running the race, shunning the race.
The pressure gnaws, teachers draw facts and dates which
I put past my mind onto paper as the wound stays undressed.
No time to see a doctor racing on a ladder.
But I'll heal I promise myself when I'm dead.

March 15, 1988

Bike Ride March 15, 1988 Also for Michael J. Conklin, 1967-88.
Let's ride to the park and sit on the swings, not talking. We'll drag our
feet on the sand, and ride around again. You were my opposite, my
confidante.
I can't bring back summer. I can't bring back green trees. I
am left with shadows looking like you, talking like me.
Quick! Ride back home fast as you can.
Sit by your drums and I'll play air guitar until dinnertime.

Section V August 1988 through May 1989

Dogma Approximately September, 1988
Every morning I wake to pray
before a cold brick wall and metal cabinet.

I mumble ancient Hebrew, think in
mis-translated English. My words
fade into a sleepy blur.

I pray for a miracle by any woman's name.
My thoughts are as cold as my bed in the morning.

I'm reminded of Chasidim swaying in black hats.
My face is shaven, my head goes uncovered. I
wear no Tefillin.

I think of my quick breakfast,
how I have to be at work in less than an hour.

But G-d and I take time from our schedules. I
pray when I can.

Lunchtime in the Quad (for D.)

She sits against a stone fountain
facing an old mansion.

It's Wednesday, she skips a class to meet friends.

She inspects the tan on her arms, then wraps them
around her knees.

Cigarette ashes fall on brown grass.
Brown locks fall into her eyes
as she flirts with passing boys.
It is Wednesday and she dreams a man beside her.

Marisa This is no way about pedophilia!

Marisa is four,
a girl with brunette ponytails, and a red jumpsuit.
She wants to play
with day-gin plastic horses she calls dollies.

Marisa calls me her best buddy
and shows off the macrame bracelet I just gave her.

"Let's play a different game!"
Out comes a yawn.
She pulls on my left leg.
"Where's my daddy?"

With dollies in one hand,
she reaches for me.
I put her on my left shoulder.
"Where's my daddy?", she asks again.

Approximately October, 1988

Insomnia Approximately November, 1988

He turns for the fiftieth time, half to his
right, twisting his back.

He sweats on cotton sheets, shivering,
half wrapped between crotch and neck.

He rolls on the mattress
to the side where her legs curled last night.

Each night he turns another fifty positions
missing her warm torso.

Thrifting With Friends

In John's Bazaar, we search for black trenchcoats
and shot glasses.

Christmas trimming surrounds children's books
on gray drop-clothed loveseats.

Wire hangers hold up orange and pink mou-mou's
from the fifties, reeking of mothballs.

"Who died in these?", I wonder, wanting to leave. I
cough from dust and cigars.

Trish gets china.

Mark finds bamboo curtains in Seagram's crates.

"Home Sweet Home" signs don't appeal to me.

Approximately November, 1988

Too Stuff

I wish there were an emb to phloegm.

When I see my girl between classes, she asks:

"What's wrong, honey?" I cannot speak.

I scurry to the bathroom after one hour's sleep. I
apologize to an empty stall for the sheep and
trumpet noises.

There's no end to this. Vitamin C doesn't help.

I'll blow off class and get some sleep.

Written approximately December, 1988

Waiting To Buy Beer At Quick Trip A

man with one good eye
smears ketchup from one piece
of white bread onto the other.

He wears a Ruback's Jeweler's hat on his silver head. I
saw him first last month.

He's wearing the same brown tweed coat, off-white shirt, and brown pants.
He stares until I glance at the cashier. I can't decide between Stroh's or Bud
Light.

He puts his ketchup sandwich into his pocket,
muttering about his wife Myrna waiting for
him in heaven.

As I try to leave he says: "Surgery made
one eye droop." Everytime I buy beer he
mentions this.

Written approximately December, 1988

Bribery

For my grandparents: David and Mary Schwartz, Abraham and Bertha Brimer

Abe and Bertha Brimer
wanted to see their grandsons' Bar-Mitzvahs.

Abe put the fork to his mouth,
pouring a salt mound on his rice.
He looked up to the brown water spot on the ceiling.
He often looked there to see G-d smile.

"Well, G-d we've had a good life. Just a few more years.
I promise to give them my collection from the jewelry business."

Bertha finished her soup, pushed the bowl to the table-side,
and cut her deck from the A&P grocery.
"Nu, G-d? Remember the house on LePere?
Remember how we gave birthday parties?"

Abe said: "We don't need our health so much,
just enough to see the boys' Bar-Mitzvahs."
She added they'd give the boys a thousand dollars each.

"Just a little more time," Abe said as he wiped his plate with rye bread. She took the plate as he ate the crust.

Bertha pulled the Ace of Spades from the deck, as Abe picked his dentures with a thumbnail. For a few minutes, they each said, "Thank You, G-d." She finished her hand of Solitaire.

Written Approximately January, 1989

Cleaning Fish

The paper stinks as I unroll it
and the haddock falls on the floor.
Its left eye stares. It's ready to fight, but the knife's in my hand.

I cut off the head.
Its cloudy eye gazes at me as I wipe blood on a towel.

I slit the belly to find it full
of green algae and fish bones.
I cut a finger on a bone, as I cut it out,
thinking of my next meal.

Any other man or fish hungry as I
would have eaten it sooner, so it's better off my plate. "Eat your heart out, Charlie Tuna."

I squeeze the middle, scaling it with a dull paring knife.
I scrape the loosened flakes aside, and cut another finger on a bone.

My knife sticks on the spine.
"Damn, why don't you work with me?" I
twist my wrist to free it,
breaking the blade at the hilt.

Written approximately February, 1989

Fencing

We dueled with branches, mopsticks, or poles from a badminton set.
Once we found some garden stakes.

I colored mine with gold crayon, and Mike left his brown.
I nailed on a popsicle stick handle but he cut one from a Clorox bottle.

We clashed like two Errol Flynns, hands poised behind our heads.
We pranced in circles, aiming for each other's bellies.

I cornered him against the fence where I cracked his handle.
He yanked it off, then shouted: "You shudna done that!"

Then he tried to slash me, swinging with both hands.
He exposed new wood as he chipped my blade. "Now
I'm gonna get you!" he said;
knocking my sword so hard I dropped it.
After he poked me with his stake, he said he won.

Written around March, 1989

Finding My Father's Grave For
my father, Siebert Schwartz

My mother reminded me that it was nearly Rosh Hashanah. I
should visit my father's grave before the new year
to say the prayer for the dead.
I flew from K.C. on a business flight and took a taxi to the cemetery.

I walked past the small graves of the suicides.
Facing a service road, a warm breeze blew dust in my face.
An old care-taker collected leaves with his vacuum.

"No, he wasn't buried here," I muttered to myself. The
care-taker stared at me. I didn't have a yarmulke.

When I reached the care-taker's shack,
I knew I'd walked too far. I still didn't see the stone. I
started to sweat as I wandered.
Then I heard the thunder, I felt more dust against my neck.

I visited the cemetery office to check the map of the plots.
A sign said, "Back in an hour." I started looking again. I
asked the man collecting leaves. He shook his head.

I wiped my neck with a hand, kicking some pebbles.
"No one loses his own father in a cemetery!"
Finally, I found the unkept grave near the other entrance.

As I said the Kaddish, I covered my head with my hand.
"Well, I've come a long way. I just graduated college and you'd be proud of me."
Then I hailed a taxi back to the airport.

Written around March, 1989

Holding It During Mahler's 2nd

The violinist plucks each string as he caresses the violin.
I'm almost asleep during Mahler's 2nd.
He pulls the bow, contorts his shoulder and neck,
straining to stretch each note.

He's lulling me, but as he begins a new movement, drawing the bow faster,
my legs begin sawing wildly.

My fingers dig into my chair's velvet arms.
The violinist closes her eyes, tapping the
strings with his bow.

So Many Blackheads

Inspired by The Beatles' "Don't Pass Me By"

I've got so many blackheads, I don't know what to do.
I've got so many blackheads, now I can't date you. I've
tried to eat good, I've tried sleeping too.
I've tried not to pop my zits, then I wanted to see you.

Oh summer is a bummer as sweat runs down my face.
There's no Clearasil left in the drawer, no Oxy 10 pad jar!
I've tried to eat good, I've tried to wash right too. Then I
tried to sleep, but I tossed at night...

Thinkin' 'bout blackheads, talkin' 'bout zits. Talkin' 'bout blackheads,
I've lost my wits.

May 29, 1991

Cattle Cars

I sought silence from the stampede as I grew weary from the crowds and the noise. I
pushed further into the herd, but could see neither food nor water.
When I looked up at the others, I was scared by their eyes.
They looked uncertain of their journey and future home, but they smiled wanly.
I wish I knew where we were headed A new yard? A butcher's block?
All I could do was wait to board my first train. I
was prodded away from my mother,
then pushed on a train by the others.
Why did they order me to be silent and still?
Others followed, leaving me no room to move.
The footsteps stopped, the door slammed shut.
I was hardly able to breathe as I wondered where we were headed.
I only saw a glimmer of daylight filtering through.
I took comfort in the quiet black when I shut my eyes.
Cars clanged as they rocked, sickening me. I had
nowhere, to lean. I shut my eyes tightly. The train
lurched to a halt.

June 6, 1991

Discussions For Jenny Hausmann

We talked calmly and quietly as the world drones in the background.
We talk of the future of men and women and time between us.

As we talk, we are interrupted by call-waiting, by other lives talking.
Can you hear the words?

I've rarely found conversation so sweet and pleasing as I have with you.
You listen enough, I not enough. You rarely speak your idea, before I say mine.
I've rarely found anyone I want to hear as much as you.

The phone clicks again. We rarely get the time right before we must start over with different words and goals. We talk of the past of men and women and time between us. We whisper to be heard sharing soothing words so rare today. The world drones loudly.

March 9, 1992

Chigger Bitten

Nature nips at my ankles and pinches my heels. These tine tests still torture.
Pin pricks waken me to spring.

Nature nips my eyes as I watch bright white clouds swallow morning promises and wash them down with dew. I can't watch the sky or the blossoming billowing greens. My eyes cloud from the dusty wind.

I stay for the sake of sitting, collecting bites to scratch
as another day bends down with stars.
When I'm gone, the scars will fade off my legs, dust will claim the stoop
on which I rest and soak up the rain. The bites remind me I am alive, I am alive.

April 23, 1992

She's Just A Radical Feminist _ For J.FW.

She pays her own way and then some,
always opening her own doors and never begs.
She doesn't shave her armpits or her legs.

Chorus:

She's just a radical feminist (Doo, doo, doo)
Just a liberated idealist (Ooh, ooh, ah)

She's fed up with patriarchy and she's got a body politic
I'm not taken too seriously because I've got a....BIC

I don't care if her hair's not too long,
I'm just afraid of being culturally wrong.
It doesn't matter if either of us carries a purse,
If men could breastfeed things could be much worse.

Repeat Chorus 3 times

End:

She doesn't attend flower shows.
Oy, what would the neighbors say?
I'm glad we're friends...(Barbershop quartet style)

May 24, 1992

Section VII June 1992 through April 1994

Angry Prayer

G-d, Hear my shouts and screams from my feet to my throat.
I dare you to listen.
Job is the last person I plan to emulate,
I'm trying to be the best me though I curse night and day for loneliness and light.
After this therapy and that, prayer is what I seek,
a moment of understanding.
But I don't feel Your benevolence. Listen.
It's hard to start with "Praise" and end with "Amen"
when I run up against "Damn" in the middle of my prayers and attempts with holy books.
After thanking You for health and family, I beg and demand. Although I seem to do nothing for
You, do I have any rights?
I can't understand punishment, anger and honesty, nor me. Help me to help me. How about some
healing? Please answer.

June 6, 1992

Fall

Gold and crimson fall, twirling, blowing,
gliding through the air. They're like patches from angels'
robes shed before a change to white.

Orange, green, brown and yellow patches tumble
to a brown comforter. No one lies on it. It grows cold. A
whisper sends them sailing down
and they jump up from a breeze caught from behind. They
drop again spinning dizzy to rest on the blanket and wait for
friends.

October 8, 1992

"Ho, Ho", said the Platypus A Sea Chanty

Chorus:

"Ho, Ho", said the platypus and "hello" he said to me. "I may
be ugly, but I'm happy as can be."

"I'm glad I'm not a dog, a crocodile or a sloth in a tree." "I'm
proud to be a platypus, can't you see?" (Chorus)

"I may not have a girlfriend or a house in K.C.
I'm~a little lonesome, won't you swim with me?" (Chorus) "I have
no steady job. I'm maligned by humanity. But I'd be happy if you
visit me at sea." (Chorus)

(Repeat 1 st verse, end with chorus.)

October 20, 1993

An Obscene Blues Country Ditty

I used to be a booger, now I'm a snot. (2x)

Now you ignore me. One day you'll want what I've got.

You used to call me nitwit, now you just call me twit (2x) I
wouldn't mind your cussin', but yer lyin' you should quit.

Bridge:

How many times have I really wronged you? How many times have you cried?

You never had cause to throw me out the door. You can't accuse me of calling you a-

I tell you I still love you, but you say it will pass. (2x) When I buy
you nice things, you say I only sit on my grass.

I want to kiss you, but you say I'm out of luck. (2x)

When I try to cuddle, you go off to sleep in the truck. (To Bridge)

I never meant to hurt you, that you must know. (2x)

But with all your shoutin' and punchin', I guess it's time to go.

December 6, 1993

I'm Not Jon Ferber (For an old buddy who used to inspire my music at open-mikes)

Chorus:

I'm not Jon Ferber. (3x) No, I'm not.

I don't sing like Jon Ferber. I don't write songs like Jon Ferber.

I don't play guitar like Jon Ferber. Though I wish I did, I do not. (Chorus)

Please give me money for voice lessons

Please give me money for music theory lessons.

Please give me money for guitar lessons and I'll
be happy not to rot. (Chorus)

Then maybe I'll form a band. I

can have lots of groupies.

I might work in a music store. I

could pay my rent. (Chorus)

January 21, 1994

Sunday Ride March 6, 1994

I'm hung over as I wake, racing the sun
out of my house out onto the street.
My head throbs as I watch
the sneaky hot white dirt ball dart between barren trees.
Despite the expected high in the 70s,
we might face a late snow.

I'm headed east with her on a day trip,
as I try to forget the where-to's, where-from's
and I don't have the where-with-all to pay attention. She's driving. I'm glad.

If only I can navigate her
over the two-inch wide Lego sculpture
the Army of Engineers call a bridge.
The screws better be tight on this thing.
Somehow speed keeps us from tumbling
into what might be water or concrete.
A drunk Frank Lloyd Wright designed this stretch.

After an eternity of twelve miles,
we pass the same hotel signs, same schools,
and same clouds which look like Liquid Paper wiped on blue jay eggs so
my eyes shut them out.

The AM talknet radio chants on as if coming
from the opposite side of the door to detention.
It's just my ears, but I'm afraid to cover them in
case I'll miss something like "We're here."

I'm half attuned to my headache,
half to the slit vision view of the mile markers
telling me it's Illinois, not Kansas.
Worse yet, my bucket seat saddle tightens my pants
more than a woman's jeans commercial could hope to.

We're obviously like two tandem summer campers reluctantly
on the same round-up, wanting to be home.
The fields look like they're thawing just for today
while trucks, Florida plates and Imprezas pass us.

I can almost hear "Woodstock" as the sun hits gliders,
as trees flash back in the corners of my eyes.
If it weren't for a workday tomorrow, we'd almost have to wreck
while "It's All Right, Ma, I'm Only Bleeding" fades into the credits. Amen, we stopped.

Auto Repair Shop

I've been told a number of times
that this is the best rear wheel alignment place in town.
So I sacrifice the day and my bank account
to prevent tire wear with the knowledge
my coverage could be cancelled if I don't watch myself.

I don't want to leave, because that would excuse Chuck
leaving my '92 Corolla for a large bean burrito.
We both know full well that their parts supplier is across town,
and I want to make sure it's done today.

As I eye the half empty pot of coffee
I remember my last trip to Seven-Eleven,
or maybe that American flight to Waco.
Anyhow, I went from hot to cold, with stomach cramps. I
swore that the creamer didn't matter. I was no lab rat.
Still, it looks good in its brown, crusty bottomed pot.
Hard to believe the glass didn't dissolve.

I could have brought a book to hide in,
but one more word after today's newspaper will tire me.
There's no t.v. and "Oldies Radio" is inaudible
over the hydraulic machines and garage doors slamming.

Napping is about as good as leaving.
No worse. It says, "Sure, waste my day though I was first." If
I sleep now, I might not sleep later,
and I'm on no train bound for glory where it would matter.

If I needed the toilet, it would be like a field trip. Better save it for later.
They can't be prodded. Napping is about as good as anything else,
though they ought to remove their commercial, replacing it with an apology to me. I
almost wish I were getting a filling,
there'd be something to do with my jaw dropped open.

March 6, 1994

Passover Order

It's springtime and a young man's thoughts turn to pure unadulterated lust.
It's springtime, and I have to buy my family's Passover order.

I'm watching her in the frozen section, checking for "Kosher LePesach" label.
She turns my way as I pass the dairy case.

As I get to the "specialty items aisle"
I see the cornucopia of unleavened products.
The Festive Italian dressing and honey-nut macaroons
couldn't possibly touch her cooking.

Her glasses fit perfectly on her button nose
as the reflection in the lenses brightens her soft eyes.
Her curls fall onto her unblemished face.
Then she tosses her hair back over her shoulder,
leaning over the unleavened griddle cake box
(Ah, modern conveniences!). She laughs to herself.

Should I walk up and make conversation?
Should I ask the relative merits of Manischewitz versus Streit's
matzah and marble cake mixes?

She studies the cooking oil and puts it in her cart.
She holds the plum preserves in her left hand,
the orange marmalade in her right, going with the plum.
Thatta girl! I'd like to invite myself over to try it. She
smiles coyly over her shoulder, turning her cart. She
couldn't possibly be interested. Here she comes!

March 8, 1994

The Salad Dressing Ballad A parody of the folk song `Matty Groves'~ a mother-son dialogue

"Oh Mother, oh Mother, weed-killer, the salad dressing smells.

I am afraid to swallow it, much less take a bite."

"Eat now, child, no other food is there, my little tike.

Feed now on this salad, before it is gone the night."

"I will not eat, Mother, until the bottle you show me.

For as much as I trust you,

our times have gone afoul.

"I made it fresh this morning, to the trash the bottle I did carry.

The dressing is fresh, I insist.

Your nose does not tell true."

"Can I persuade you to let me check the garbage can?

The expiration date may be past or evil was done long ago.

"If you are so smart, then through it dig young man. I will tell you now as in the past, long I've fed you son.

Had I meant to harm you, I could've hung you with a towel."

"I found it, I found it, like I said I would.

Mother do not eat thereof. I'd sell my birthright fast, than be poisoned because of your defensive mood."

"I am sorry, Son I doubted you, but right you were.

Through your perseverance, you showed the greater love.

Even if we take mining jobs, we will find better food."

"Oh Mother, sweet Mother, to the grocery we must go, and take with us the sheriff to seize the dressing. Many lives we must save before the store does close."

"My darling boy, you are so wise.

This bottle we must show and share our blessing. We must protect others before the death toll grows."

Friends, dear friends, here is a pithy moral quote.

I tell you to check your dressing and wash your vegetables.

I beg that you chew on my words or you may never eat again.

March 15, 1994

Family Ride Inspired by Ray Kirsch's song
"Holiday Ride"

I love the lilac breeze blowing
through the car,
how it pushes your brown curls down your shoulders.
You smile as you turn to the window and farms passing by.

Chorus:

You say you need the breeze
to warm you inside.
It takes you back to smells of
jasmine and pine.
I wonder if you want me here,
but you say it's fine
just to be a girl again
on a family ride.

We don't have much longer
until we're home, I'm thinking.
I turn to see you've drifted off,
somewhere I can't reach.
My eyes tire of the highway
and lights in the mirror,
then I see the moonlight on your cheeks.

I used to be like you, I said while
you were driving.
I would stare at the stars,
growing sleepy,
and wish I were old enough
to keep driving on, wondering if
I'd always feel alone.

I have to keep my hands on the wheel,
though I wish I could kiss you and
draw you near. You've got your
dreams and we seem distant.
If I woke you, is that how you'd feel? (Chorus 2 times)

April 25, 1994

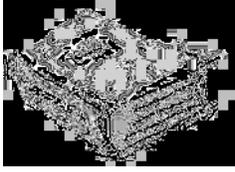
About the Author:

David M. Schwartz was born and raised in the St.Louis County area. He went to Clayton public schools and earned his B.A. in Judaic Studies from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Subsequently, he earned his MSW from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. He continues to remain an active writer and songwriter. David uses Yamaha guitars and John Pearse phosphorescent bronze light strings exclusively.

Typesetting Notes: This book was assembled with the help of a Macintosh Ilci and the programs MacWrite II, Pagemaker 4.2, and QuarkXpress 3.1. The font is New Century Schoolbook. Text was set in 12 point type, headers in 24 point or larger. The work was done by Larry Morrissey of Overland, MO, May-June 1994 .

Updated Note: This book was re-edited for .pdf format by the author, who spell-checked the document. All previous formatting was unfortunately lost when scanning it. Most poems were put on the same page as others because of space concerns. Section 5 contains revised works from two semesters of a poetry class at the University Of Missouri-Kansas City, so the dates blurred quite a bit. Unfortunately, all previous type-setting was lost, but thanks does go to Larry Morrissey for his original work. The last graphic was part of my licensed copy of Microsoft Office 2003's clip art collection.

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