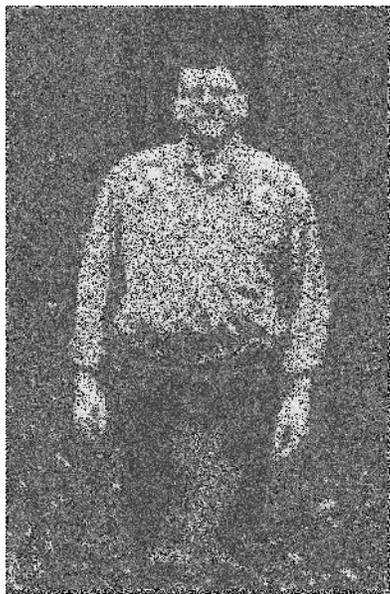


WINTER POEMS

(More snow in my thoughts than on television).



Yet even more poetry by David M. Schwartz

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Previously Published:

"Sweet Child" in Ink blot magazine, Clayton, MO, 1984

"farmer death" in Broadside, Bradley University,
Peoria, IL 1987

"Lunchtime in the Quad" in Number One, vol. 42,
University of Missouri-Kansas City Press, 1989

Also by David M. Schwartz:

5/8 of Everything I've Written

"Ho-Ho", Said The Platypus and Other Snappy Titles

Amber Waves of Nausea

A Pickle for Bernice

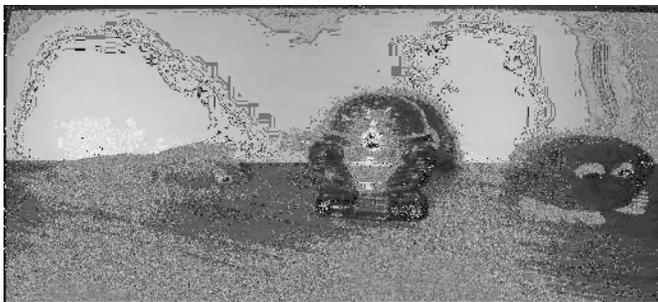
Hey! I Just Write This Stuff

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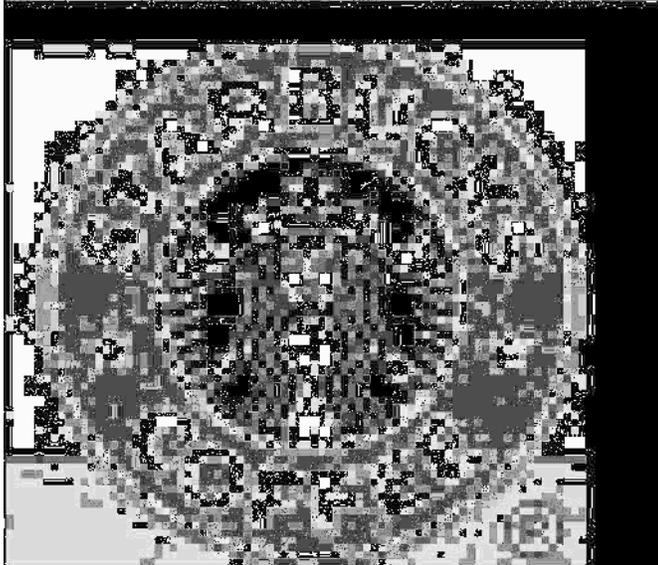
This book is dedicated like the last ones to my family and friends. Special thanks to G-d for giving me the strength to share myself through this book when I should be doing something more productive, and for the folks with whom to share it.

This book in particular was written starting in late autumn, 2004 and winter 2005. When I have a sudden upswing in creativity, I run with it. This time, I have added random pictures for my own amusement. I can do that, because I am my own editor. My original concept was a poem for each year of my life and an extra , totaling 39 pieces. Then, I got tired and decided not to spoil a good thing. Okay, maybe it's not as much good as much as a twisted, tormented, occasionally humorous collection. Enjoy, but not in the bathroom! Trust me on this.

Special thanks to my mentors, shown below.



Brought to you in part probably too much



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Preface January 2, 2005

I started writing poetry and songs
when I was about 14.

I had ideals, both right and wrong,
and no clue really about life at all.

Not much has changed, I am no more deranged
than those tragic years we call high school.

In my latest collection,

There may be a detection that I have matured.

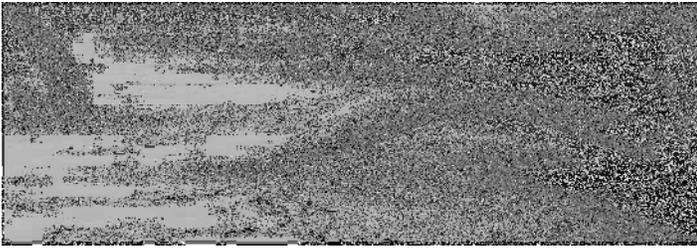
Rest assured, it's just not true.

Moreover, I nearly called this work "The Mad Genius of David M. Schwartz."

However, I am not that mad, much less angry.

Medicine didn't help along the way to take my thoughts or stop these words.

Anyhow, get back to me on the poetry, would you?



Late Night On Delmar Boulevard December 14, 2004

I don't remember the band's name, but I remember the noise.

The smell of the smoke still gags me, and I feel my shoes tread slowly.

I can barely move through the crowd, as I stick to the stinking beer-soaked floor.

Nowhere to go, I might as well stay.

I order another drink, and shiver from the fan in the back.

There is nowhere to sit.

It's not like the music will bring me redemption, not that I was expecting it.

Then, I saw you over my left shoulder.

You smiled at me, or rather through me.

I wanted you to come close, maybe sashay by.

I wondered if your perfume still lingered in the haze around your auburn hair.

How I wanted to run upstairs with you.

I wish I could've taken you home.

We could've walked but a few blocks and dropped on my couch. I

would've covered you with my coat and slept in a chair, not

wanting to disturb you.

Instead, I walked myself into the 20 degree air.

How it felt good to be slapped awake, with the smoky chimney goodness

and the late night pizza dough intoxicating me.

Meanwhile, you walked on past alone, not with anyone.

It was not my place to follow you, as if you would've led.

I skulked across the street to the empty lot.

You walked ahead right past my car, and I tracked you with blurry blood-shot eyes. I

got in my frosty window tank, and you did not notice the car door slam. I knew my

fifteen minute drive might as well be fifteen hours

with my head big as a balloon.

Ah... but you smiled for that minute.

I remembered my celebrating my youth,

or long-lost lack thereof.

And I wish I took you to my class reunion

Or business dinner. I admit that I have always wanted to make heads turn.

Like the way you caused me whiplash.

I drove a straight line by a miracle. I

didn't roll through lights.

I was glad to leave the car,

and let it sleep as I would sleep alone.

How I wanted to stop the echoes.

How I wanted to stop the room spinning, and my bed tilting. I

would have stayed up all night watching you sleep,

I would have loved to make you breakfast morning after morning,

but I am too old and tired for many rock concerts anymore.

Gray December 14, 2004 It's
not so late but it's gray. There
are not even clouds, Just a
desperate bleakness.

There's no sun or moon.
Street lights can't pierce trees' shadows,
Neither could torches guide.

An early heavy frost fell.
Leaves look white not brown.
Night settles to ash.



Counter-Clockwise December 19, 2004

Yesterday, I walked twice around the block. I knew that it would be in the teens today. I walked up the street and headed left, and debated going to the park.

It was good to breathe in the cold air, before it would grip my chest tighter than I ever could. It was good to feel the sun and wind on my face.

I walked past a heap of sticks on the sewer cover, and studied them as if they were an altar for a carefully placed sacrifice. I could only offer my sweat and this poem, and that would have to do.

I walked past trees which witnessed secrets, laughter, and promises with bravado that I swore while riding my bike. The trees are bare, but they have not changed. They just seem to stare back at me.

As I walked, I went counter-clockwise from my house. It was good for a change from my conventional path. I usually walk counter to something, if only my own goals. It was as if my legs and body were getting shorter, taking me back to 15 years old when I knew it all, and when I enjoyed the solitude just like now.

Confession Too Late December 14, 2004

I told you before you left,
and I am telling you now.
We would've been good together,
but you didn't give me the chance.

I had all you wanted, including a car.
Your idea of fun was getting my advice. I
put off plans more than once,
for the pleasure of your voice,
in my ear, and in the seat next to mine.

I had no one to use,
to try to make you jealous.
I couldn't want to do so if I tried.
I begged you to not to tell me of your loves,
Having none myself so it just is not fair, and I
am neither priest or counselor,
and I might close my heart for the winter.

When Christmas eve came,
all the young were out, getting drunk, picking up dates. I
checked for you at the bar, outside in the snow,
inside among the strangers, with their eyes boring through me.
So I went home cursing the most blundered time of the year.

Even with a cell phone,
you didn't call, you didn't think that I might be waiting. Didn't
I warn you by New Year's that I would wait no more? You are
in the West, having come so far from the East. I am in the
center, pulling myself apart at the seams. You know that even
if I visited you, nothing would change.

When you blow on in once in the fall or spring,
You don't know what it means for me.
As much as I want to see you, to hear your whisper,
I stand in place shrinking a little more.
Don't you know we don't share un-consummated love, much less friendship?

I don't want to say goodbye or get lost,
nor would I want to hear that myself.
I have tried to warn you it is not fair to lay your love life on me.
So don't be surprised if I am suddenly busy, or don't pick up the phone.
I will wait until the snow melts and you are gone again from your surprise visit.
Still I don't expect your call unless you hurt yourself and some other guy again.

Racing The Sun December 15, 2004

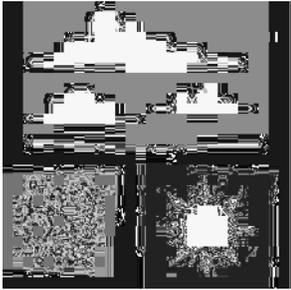
I left work early today
so I could beat traffic and an early blazing sunset.
It seems I'm always racing against the sun and myself,
not even taking time to place a bet.

It looks like I'm falling behind against the sun.
It's just like I'm falling behind with marriage and kids,
between work and looking for work. I'm always on the run.

If that sun and sky were to absorb me now, I could almost fly.
The sky might as well just sweep me up and take me in,
I suppose that would be a wonderful way to disappear and die.

Now I wish upon this off-ramp that I could continue to roam,
and that I could lasso these clouds that follow me.
They look like ones atop the Rockies, that I framed and I brought home.

I am wary of my destination, tired of what awaits.
though I am free in my car alone,
It's as if I am always late. I have been going nowhere. But,
I have no one to question me, while I'm on my own. Maybe
that is why I race on.



Crystals December 15, 2004

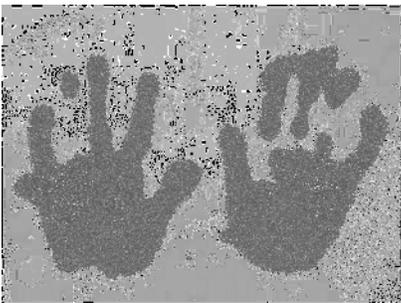
The moon sparkles as I go out for the morning paper.
I am safe upon my front walk, but far away from the house.
The expanse of pre-dawn night takes me aback.
Maybe it is the temperature in the teens, but it could be the sky.

I am out among the trees for 30 seconds.
It is as if I can't move as I look up and all around.
The stars wink their greeting, as if trying to reflect planes or satellites.
They are older than the Earth, but it is as I have never seen them.

There are crystals around the new moon forming a halo of white. I
wonder if they shed their skin sometimes,
or would sprinkle magic dust on me, like Jiminy the Cricket.
Maybe it is too late to wish, but I never seen the stars or crystals fall.

Still on the ground, there is a sparkling sea amidst the leaves. I
see my breath then the frost,
as if spirits are trying to signal me.
I don't know what they are saying, and I wish I could stay outside.

Though the day is pressing, my eyes are seeking miracles in the cold.
Maybe, I will wear a coat tomorrow just to stare at the sky. Maybe it
will be like camping, but for five minutes at a time. I am ready for the
winter and the blue tint of snow.
I am happy for the crystals falling on me,
just like when I dreamed as a child.



My handprints at age 3. As you can see, I had a pretty hallucinatory pre-school adventure, even without any chemical help.

Cold Chin (Just The Same) December 19, 2004

I remember a walk 24 years ago, in 1980.

It was winter break and I was glad to be out of junior high,
Having no idea that high school would be more alienating.
but I was just getting good at solitude and suffering.

John Lennon had been shot three weeks prior,
and I knew it meant something, but I didn't know what.
But I was 13 and so full of myself as I walked up to the corner to mail a letter.
I remember singing "Woman" as if I understood what John professed for Yoko,
or I could possibly profess for the blonde two seats in front of me in science.

At 13, I knew it all about the 1960s and 70s, though I was only 12 in the rage of disco.
As I walked that day, I won't forget the sun in my eyes.
I was hot in my coat, but I was sweatier when I came back home
than on the walk itself.

I remember the brown leaves, the bare trees too.
There was a light snow if I recall.
Most of all, I remember the wind and the cold on my chin,
as if it would crack open.
My chin was that of a baby-face waiting to develop into a hairy monster man-child,
and it was hot just the same from the windburn and the numbing frost. Just the same,
it felt good to be alive.

I remember feeling I should mourn John,
not that he was the father I lost nearly 5 years before.
I remember feeling bad for Sean, half my age and now a man.
but I knew all I needed, and it only 20 years to own the entire Beatles catalog.

I looked for clues of something in the Shaved Fish album,
not that I know anything about Cold Turkey,
But I do know cold chins and a volatile desire for adolescent angst and peace.
There was no war, just the Reagan eighties beginning.

Just as I was glad to go on my mail mission,
I was glad to be home, to rest and to be 13.
I sought kindred vision back then, two years before I would begin writing.
It's 24 years later, many winter walks too,
and I have realized the extent to which I am so full of myself
that I was empty of my own identity seeking to become a poet/musician/politician.
Just the same, I am happy not to be shot, thank you very much.
Still, not much has changed except the leaves and the home owners.
Now that I am older, my chin grows stiffer still.

Of Leaf-Raking December 21, 2004

Ahh! Yes! Warm Shower!

A wonder to savor now!

It refreshes me.

I raked leaves today.

though I wish I could have willed

that they blow away.

But I am grateful

for strength of body and mind to

rake them away.

I left most backyard leaves

for yet another day maybe

off in May.

Perhaps it will snow

and prevent me from raking

though the yard may rot.

The lawn mower can't help if

the ground is mostly mud.

Raking beats blowing.

I did what I could

and would not be sad for snowfall

or leaves becoming mulch.

I would not merit

my simple pleasure to bathe. if

I had not worked.

The Newspaper December 22, 2004

There is an economy
to my simple words
like there is to my slow steps.

My breath is weighted
as if coming from my boots.
I'm in snow, not space.

I have layered coats,
and swathed in scar for the trip
from front door to curb.

This is my only contact I
will have today
with nature and my city.

I walk gingerly
with bent knees and arms to
fetch today's newspaper.

I would cancel it except I
like the comics and the
glossy ads.

After five minutes
I forget the darn shovel
and just want to return.

I bend down quickly
reaching into white abyss
for printed treasure.

I look up at my home far off
so close yesterday I am
thankful for shelter.

I trudge quickly up
less fearful with more traction
ready for tea and nap.

Six-Eight-Six December 23, 2004

I'm a crafty rebel
breaking poetry rules and forms.
syllables mean nothing.

In my mind, I mold words.
I amuse myself with my verse,
as there's no need to please.

I've been told haikus must
have words of five seven and five
syllables per each line.

However, I think rhythm improves
stretching phrases to limits
throwing out rhyme and reason alike.

I sometimes write of writing or
seeking love yet spurning.
The words come like snow storms.

Play Date December 24, 2004

I took my inner child out to play.
We wandered through the park amongst the bare trees.
Despite the snow, he wanted to swing.
I pushed him until he gained momentum,
and came back down because he was cold.

We found some old cardboard to use as a sled.
He shrieked each time we went down the hill.
We narrowly missed trees.
Often, I fell off half-way down, and shook off the snow.

As we walked back home, he said he had fun.
"I'm glad," I replied.
"Can we do it again?," he asked.
"Not too soon I'm afraid.
I have to work a lot more to keep you fed, and in shoes and clothes."
Besides, you're getting too old to take out to play like this."

He dejectedly looked away as we walked on.
"I'm sorry, but you'll probably be saying this yourself one day."
He mumbled "I hope not." I said I hoped not either.
We reached home in silence.
He found a game console waiting on the kitchen table. I
guess old habits die hard.

Winter of Past Ghosts December 24, 2004

It's only fitting that the snow should fall
as I stare out the bedroom window.
I'm awaiting imaginary love or day-dreaming,
and the streets look slick just like in "It's A Wonderful Life."
But, I have no hopes of getting my wings anytime soon or rescuing a bank.

The lawn disappears while I watch,
as the houses are washed in white,
as if to cover our individual sins.
But, they merely blanket the birds' nests for the night.

The lights they flicker as if to tell me
to stop wasting my time and move on.
My private dreams and poems are all I have now,
because everything else I burned, sold or gave away.
I tired too easily of journaling, except for poems like this.

Tonight is Christmas Eve, not that I care or observe it.
There is no excitement anymore, except to be done with the displays and commercials.
I'm long past winter breaks or wanting to play in the snow.
I've got no kids to take anywhere, and a little joy comes from resting on my own.

The car lights flicker as if winking for no reason.
I wait for the mail arriving late, and the Sunday paper arriving two days early. I
wouldn't want to stick around either, they might as well drop it off. The song
"Watching The Wheels" plays like 24 years ago.

I remember watching the street while listening.
Distinctly I hear Kiss Alive II, The Monkees and Steve Martin too.
I get a little wistful, with nowhere to go, no reason to stay poised this way.

As I hear the voices, I think of romance comedies.
Life and love are not like that, and I won't be making angels with women,
Moving our arms on the ground.
So I turn back to my room, smile bittersweetly.
I am happy for an early night's rest tonight.

The Garage December 24, 2004

“Lady, it’s cold outside.
If you don’t mind, I could wait down here in your garage.
Ten minutes should do it until the truck comes around.

See, work’s been slim and I’ve been cleaning walks and drives. I
like honest work, but there hasn’t been a lot.
I won’t bore you with my story or ask for more money.
You’re like me, just doing what we can.

Could I have some water, though? Despite
the cold, I’m drenched in sweat.
As much as I drink or shovel, it’s pouring out of me.”

Me and the man made more small talk, and
waited for the truck to come around. I ran
to get his money and cup of water, so that I
could shut the garage door down.

“I’ve got more jobs to do, Son.
I hear the ice is coming soon tonight.”
Then, he walked away.

I don’t see him so much now,
but I wave from across the street.
Now the snowblower saves me time and coldness.
As I warm up in the garage, I realize that guy could have been me with just a shovel.

Winter Nap December 25, 2004

I've read about all I could this afternoon from the newspaper to old fiction.

My eyes can't focus so I put a book down.

My back is to the curtains, closed to keep the world out.

It is a grey day, and everything is in still life in the yard. I

wait for a short thaw this week to get out and rake,

and to get out and breathe. I wait for a reason to keep awake now just the same.

So, I decide I am too tired to go to my room to lay down. I

let my head lower and shoulders slink forward.

Sitting upright, I am more comfortable than trying to lay down

with so much clothes piled on the couch.

I don't pretend to meditate, nor

do I monitor my breathing. There

is no reason to resist.

Rather, sleep overtakes me like rides home after float trips.

Thoughts go by, but mostly my head is quiet. This rarity is a gift.

I sleep lightly but am aware of warmth from the furnace.

There's no need to shake myself from this lack of noise or time. There's no one to receive. I

wouldn't mind floating here, left undisturbed until night.

Night of Accounting December 28, 2004

Once a year, the time has come.
I go over the last year's receipts and tax write-offs.
It is time to recount mistakes made, lessons learned, software bought.

I itemize on lined paper, making up my own chart.
Each receipt passes from the folder to the stack.
I record each amount, ready to add, then add again at the end. It
is almost frightening to guess what I might have spent.

Outside the cold wind whistles to get my attention.
Maybe it is a sign to take stock, to stop living free.
I don't spend like I am Microsoft, being a company of one.

I remember the software that didn't work,
So I bought something new. I look at each receipt and recall the missed opportunities. I
am no richer nor wiser, nor better employed.
Yet, I try to soothe myself with the phrase "I tried."

It is almost time for that night,
But it will be different this year.
I found out that I can add medical expenses up to \$1500 or so. If
only I could take off all my car repairs!

Maybe had I proportioned charity, none of this would have mattered.
Nonetheless, I doubt it. It is not like the accountant is my final prosecutor. I
give myself enough grief doing that.
So, I commit to spending less on classes, on books, on what amounts to dust.
Yet I want to be able to say I will spend more time on family, on learning.

The numbers and thoughts come all too easy.
But all that I gamble for a tax refund makes me no more happy.
The cold wind blows and whistles in long then short, broken cries.
Then, I close my file until the accountant comes, hoping to spare an audit yet again.
Mine is internal and fierce enough.

En La Hora De La Lechuga * December 31, 2004

En la hora de la lechuga, I've seen them toss the bags out the window.

They said: "That will be \$4.50, did you want extra hot sauce?"

I would walk through sleet and snow for burritos at a kosher drive-through place.

But here we are in Missouri, and I can't find imitation pork or vegan carné asada with any grace.

Oh, en la hora de la lechuga, I would plotz for a seven-layer burrito.

Oooh why won't someone open an all-night kosher tex-mex place in Saint Lou? I would pay \$5-10 bucks, but no more.

Who wouldn't want to get rich amongst us Jews?

The restaurant might last 5 months, maybe more!

Si, amigos, if you should get rich and charitable,

Build a kosher drive-through tex-mex place.

But here we are in Missouri, and I can't find imitation pork or vegan carné asada with any grace.

En la hora de la lechuga, I've seen them toss the bags out the window.

They said: "That will be \$4.50, did you want extra hot sauce?" Oh, en

la hora de la lechuga, I would plotz for a seven-layer burrito.

Oooh why won't someone open an all-night kosher tex-mex place in Saint Lou? I would pay \$5-10 bucks, but no more.

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Cha-cha-chi!

* Think of the song "Besamé Mucho" as performed by The Beatles or Elvis Presley.

DAVID M. SCHWARTZ

"Such a nice boy!"
- his mom

"He's the man!"
-his boss



"Deserving of cult
following!"-several
singer-songwriter pals

"A mensch in every
sense!" - another
friend

A founding member of the folkish, quirky duo, (ZED), and the guy
you want to hire for your coffee house, solo gig, house party,
or laid back wedding. Hire (ZED) too! Call 862-1417 (5-9p.m.)

Now Appearing At The Following Location: On This Date:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

If you see him on the street, say howdy! Give him a full-time job.
He's got a uniquely brooding and happy-go-lucky voice.
He may even play a few traditional requests, in addition to his
own originals.

This was the promotional flyer which I created when I used to play open-mikes. I used to cart around my amp, microphone, guitar, music stand, and binder of songs. My hope was to make it big on the local circuit. Then, I got a bit burnt out, grown-up, lost money, and decided to stop fooling around with such pursuits. Also, I sold off my equipment and decided to leave open-mikes to trained professional musicians. The local coffee-houses and open-mikes came and went too, but we can re-visit the glory of yester-year. Or, perhaps not.

Disconnected January 1, 2005

I woke up for work early, had to cut short my prayers. I
had to be there early, had to cut short my prayers. Now,
I'm not proud to race through them,
But my mind was on other affairs.

I drove quick as I could to be at work by 6:45. I
drove quick as I could, to be there by 6:45. my
thoughts were pounding,
and I'm just trying to stay alive.

I was listening to music, going round the bend.
I was trying to keep calm, going round the bend.
when I spun on thin ice,
I prayed "Don't let this be my end."

Well I work on the phone, trying to help all day. I
just sit there, trying to help all day.
The people won't listen, and I get so tired.
There's got to be a better way.

When I talk to the people, they seem they're in outer space.
When those people call, I swear they're from outer space.
The more I sit there,
my mind wanders to another place.

I try to eat before co-workers bother me.
When I try to eat, I wish they wouldn't bother me.
All I want is quiet,
half an hour of serenity.

When I get out of work, I just want some air.
When I get out of work, I just want a little air.
So I head out in the cold and snow,
wondering if anybody cares.

I head out on a walk, there's no shelter I can take.
When I start walking, there's no shelter I can take.
All those people turn me away,
I'm beginning to feel I'm fake.

I sometimes want to go alone, even unto dark. I
need my time alone, even when it's dark. Yet
I'm glad for my house,
so I don't have to find a park.

Well, war is raging, people been drowning too.
The news gets so bad, cost of living rising too.
Seems there's nowhere but up to turn,
but I'm too overwhelmed trying to make do.

Do you ever feel lonely, broken and humbled too?
Do you ever feel lonely, broken and humbled too?
I've been down and disconnected,
trying to reach you.

If you're breathing at all, won't you reach back to me? If
you've got a heart at all, won't you reach back to me? I've
been sobbing and seeking,
hoping you'll set me free.

Poem Of The Old Man As An Artist January 1, 2004
When I am older, maybe twice my age and six years, I
hope to draw stick figures.
I should be better at it by then.

I hope to fit my current wardrobe, maybe minus ten pounds.
People will stare, but quality never goes out of style. It cuts down on costs too. I
am used to them. Besides, I will look "retro."

They may never have heard of ".pdf" files
or my self-titled website, I will no longer need to endow.
People will wonder why I have written my poetry. Matter
of fact, so will I.

I hope to flirt with young home health workers
or mail carriers who call me "honey."
But they won't relate to The Beatles' "Abbey Road" on 8-track tapes
or half the locations I stopped for a drink.
But that is fitting, cause I no longer relate either.

I will laugh at my weathered, freckled hands.
I will laugh at the yellowed pages of chapbooks I stowed away for special people,
that I was always hoping to meet.
No one will recognize me on the cover.

May I laugh at today's tears
from work, faith, lost love.
Maybe I will throw my head back today and in the future also.
Maybe I will sleep in my dash from birth to death, unafraid.
unlike the way I sleep tonight, crying and consoling myself.



My Guitar ___ January 2, 2005

My family and I searched for my guitar a month before my 18th birthday.

I had a few in mind, much like colleges, and kept to thinking about bigger names.

My lust was for an Ibanez, Alvarez Yairi, Ovation or Martin (the instrument by which others are judged), ones which I would not afford.

I remember going to stores before closing time,

playing a few that were too big for me, though I was not small.

Somehow, they sounded louder and better than my eighty-five dollar nylon string.

We looked all over town, but I had no idea I would get one.

The day before my 18th birthday, I was asked if I could make do with one in particular. It was placed in my hands and I agreed.

The store owner and my mom said it was mine.

My brother chipped in for the chipboard case.

I was beyond amazement. I was almost afraid.

I remember learning to change strings,

and accidentally tightening the capo so much it made an impression at the 5th fret.

Some dents or scratches I don't remember,

and some I wished I hadn't caused.

The trim has turned a little yellow, making it more rustic and authentic, though it was Korean made by a Japanese company.

But I look back now, a month before I turn 38.

I am bewildered, somehow younger again, still searching for a sound.

My goal then and now was not to wreck my instrument accidentally or immediately. I surpassed it by twenty years to my family's surprise, and my own.

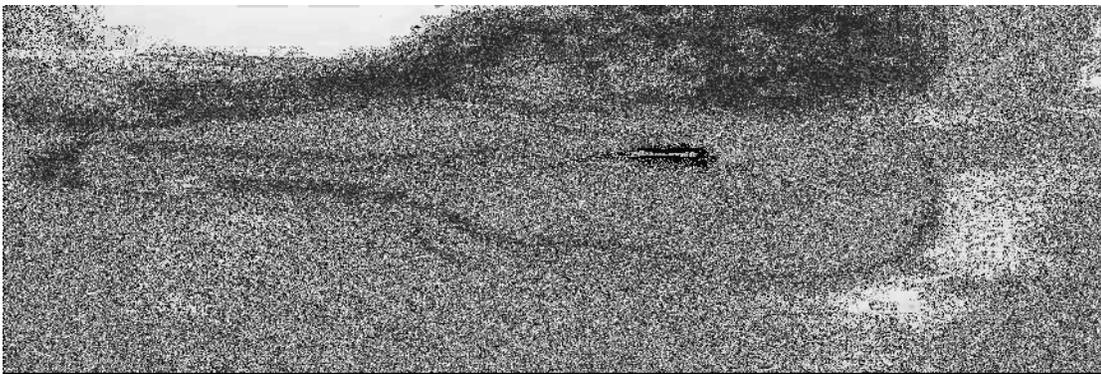
It surprises me that it sounds so good, and that I did not spontaneously combust as I thought I would at various junctures because I am not that far from adolescence just the same.

Twenty years ago, something went right,

despite algebra class, lofty dreams, and college applications.

It is good to hold my Yamaha and it holds me together despite all the tears.

It's about all I need to calm me.



Absent January 4, 2005

I don't know sometimes.

Maybe it is my stomach or my head.

But I feel sick both up and down, and I can't move. I
can't lay down, ore speak.

All I can do is sit.

After such a night when I should sleep, I

only manage to wrestle the covers.

I did not ingest anything illegal, just food. Too much of it in the last few days.

This morning, I realized I would spend more time

feeling ill than being productive.

In my half-fevered mind, I felt sicker at the financial loss of \$11.83 an hour.

But I took the chance. I called in sick, punched in some numbers. That was it.

How nice to live in an impersonal world sometimes, when I can't think straight, much less speak. It's
better not to talk to people on such days, not that I want to mope.

I slept another two hours, said my prayers in 15 minutes. Some is better than none, I suppose.

I did not want to eat, afraid that I could not keep it in.

Yet, I forced down 2 pieces of white bread and 7-Up to settle me.

How odd to be bewildered not being at the office, not putting forth effort on house-keeping.

Quiet in my head helps me, despite the pattering of the rain.

I can't move as I watch the frigid rain bathe the patio. There is no reason to move.

Today, I listen to some music, watch a movie, find myself glad it is over.

Then, I lay back down. My head hurts from the pillow, too lazy to find another. As

I write this, I dread the rest of winter.

I feel slow already, trying to drive through sleet or snow

or keep it together at a job I don't like.

I want to call in absent more often, to be absent from the outside world. Such a luxury.

I wonder if I put this poem in a bottle,

if there is a world of other absentees. Maybe I would get a date.

My computer keeps me in touch, but even chat can be unwelcome.

Why force myself and others to spend precious energy typing on a cold January Tuesday?

I was better off staying home in school with Legos and medicine alone. It is time to sleep again.

Tomorrow, I will resume my regularly scheduled chaos.

Why I Sing Alone January 8, 2005

When I was a teenager, I strove to conquer the world.
That is no surprise. I did it through poetry and song-writing,
and by learning Hebrew, my people's tongue.

I could use it pretty well, and found it more poetic than Spanish.
How I dreamt in it and sang, learning to cry out like near Babylon's rivers.
Like paper flowers, the songs and words faded.
I only play them for a special few, rarely every few years.
Can you hope to understand? I can only try to relate to you.

I dance with my faith and doctrine, as well as my community. It
seems I keep an arm's length for fear of being swallowed,
though fearful of being pulled away.
I have had my spirit trampled before and don't recommend it.

Sometimes I play for friends, if I decide not to hide within my head.
I practice and play all that is within me, careful not to give it away too soon. In
the past, I have been too trusting. But I may take a chance on you.

When I am alone, I know before Whom I stand.
When I am with others, I'm not so sure if I can sing the same hymns,
or recite the same prayers in unison anymore.
It's not that I pray fast or slow, but that I show up at all sometimes. It shocks me too.

So you might wonder how come I don't know the same songs as you. I
would just rather not march lock-step as bless G-d with all my soul.
Good and bad, gladness and madness, out it comes from me. That's
what my name-sake wrote before me.
King David carried his own tune.

Are you willing to hear me?
Will you even bother to listen, though it may not be your cup of liturgy?
Or would you rather the same songs, tried and true, but not new? Don't be
surprised then if my prayers are disguised in the blues or if my soul seeps
through in all I do.
Then again, I may be wrong about my community.
What about you? Will you only remain the same?

My Cello Player * January 10, 2005

I wish I'd meet a lady who played cello.
She'd draw that bow while my guitar I'd strum. I
would finger pick and play harmonica. Together
our strings would hum.

Her fingers they'd be slender.
Despite her playing they'd still be tender. Her long
hair over her shoulders would fall. She'd still
giggle and act surprised when I'd call. Often I'd
call her to see if she'd accompany me.

We'd play us some folk songs.
That classical stuff sure bores me.
Some songs would be short and some long,
and she'd be the muse for my poetry.

If I met my cello player,
she'd be able to follow my tune.
Because I have a bad ear for music.
I can barely read notes, and the sound fades too soon.

Now I've reached my limit,
as if this were a single ad.
I'll go on writing waltzes and sit here
Waiting for that someone to make me glad.

* There's a country song in here somewhere.



Recovering From My Career In Social Services Part XXIII ___ January 11, 2005

Will Prozac prevent my poetry?

Will it stop the thoughts unlike Xanax?

So many of them come and go, like so-called friends.

I jot some down for posterity.

Will Zoloft zap my feelings away?

Will they come again some other day?

I didn't have luck on either side

of cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Dare I say, that I am more tranquil without Paxil?

I am no more wounded

Than the Man in the Moon, though he could use some acne medicine. He could use it soon!

Nor, am I more a walking mess than the garden variety neurotic.

But I would sooner be a cucumber than cashew if I had my pick.

All day long, I go about

hatching plans and schemes.

They often involve the lottery

or blowing up my workplace (No, not timid me!). I

am a direct descendant of Walter Mitty.

Do you know what I mean?

I used to deal with others in hospitals or their homes
when I did social work.

Now I work at a helpdesk, which is not too different.

Either way, certain secret feelings lurk.

But I have found that the best medicine for me. Is
a nap well spent.

This is in no way a condemnation of those who have benefited from mental health services as much as it's an inward, rather sarcastic look at myself.

An Anguished Prayer January 14, 2005

Sometimes I feel I have no right
to speak out or murmur feelings, much less complaint.
Everything has been given me. Nothing will I lack. All
is for good, or so I tell myself.

If there is one thing I have learned,
It is hard to choose between doing kindness and being efficient at work.
I feel forced at knifepoint to choose between right or quick, between integrity or job.
So the quicker I go, the more I push others, the more it seems my world tumbles out of orbit.
Are You listening to my silent screams?

What stops me from hurling my vehicle off a ramp,
or immolating myself, or throwing grenades at work?
Aside from death, pain, or fine and prisons, my anger is coming out. Watch out!
Are You listening, G-d as I beg for the thoughts and visions to stop? Will you
soothe me or at least sedate, like Thorazine cannot do?

If I lack gratitude, it's not for others to judge.
They probably have either never felt this way,
or are ashamed to admit it. Either way, I don't want to contend with them.
So, instead I would sometimes rather hide than deal with others, than bring more pain upon my house.

Look at my life with me, please.
It seems like a barren field of shattered glass.
It is a mine field of bad career choices, mis-steps in love too.
There seems nowhere to turn, but You.

My arms are up in surrender, beseeching from defeat. I
feel I am crawling, though I stand.
For your name's sake, don't let me grovel or writhe in public. G-
d, I beg you to give me hope, and lift me up.



Walton Mountain Nightmare (A Poem Meant for Dramatic Recital) January 18, 2005 It

is over half-past January, and the fields are frozen.

Construction of many new roads and buildings has slowed.

I focus on the present and ruminate on the past and future.

That is my specialty, and should have been my college major.

As I drive to work, I feel the repetition.

It is as if I have a feedback around my head, and I am focused on the ground.

My inner voice is having a shouting contest with my thoughts.

My outer voice quit playing referee.

I am older and my writing is more seasoned.

It is not like Rod McKuen, Whitman, Frost or Thoreau.

Have I found comfort in 1970s television? Perhaps.

I remember the faux grainy photographs, the melodic tune of the Waltons.

As I write, I realize I am cursed.

It is John-Boy Walton that I have been channeling through my poetry.

It is a voice familiar, comfortable and near. It seeks great truth, undiscovered pearls.

However, I find none but to drown it out.

O, that I could leap out of myself!

I would drown, burn or pummel this voice!

It is as if Earl Hamner Junior narrates my every move.

My voice is his, not mine on every aspect of life,

From pumping gas to driving to work. Would that I remove it!

But I have found some surety just the same,

as if I have actually mellowed.

For I am not the soul-patched orange-hair angry man

of poetry slams judged on words per growl per minute.

Nor am I the suede patch flannel coat with pipe in mouth professor, or

the journalist gone to big city that John Boy tried to be.

Instead, I am just me. I am not woman, so don't hear me roar.

Nor am I golf commentator, though my days are shadowed by voice-over. I

can't walk next to Richard as if he will be my life coach.

He is probably doing infomercials anyway.

No! I do not mumble to myself alone! Instead, I write as if talking.

When your life seems disconnected, as if a play, you will know what I mean.

Perhaps you will hearken back to that first crush on Mary Ellen or Jason.

Then, the voice will leap from my head to yours. I will be freed! I will have rest and revenge.

Goodnight....

“Away, I'd rather sail away, like a swan that's here and gone
A man gets tied up to the ground. He gives the world its saddest sound, its saddest sound.
...I'd rather feel the earth beneath my feet, yes I would. If I only could, I surely would.” -
With thanks and apologies to Paul Simon

Teetering January 22, 2005

Were you the kid in gym class,
forced to rappel down the bleachers, or forced to canoe?
Did they make you run the obstacle course,
the middle of which there was the balance beam?
Did you manage to cross it, or even stay on?
Were you more afraid of hitting your head on the wood than falling off?

How different is it now?
Are you caught between mud and ice on a tightwire of sand?
Are you balanced between burning and drowning at work or in love?
Don't reach out too quickly to lose your footing.

Give me your hand in a minute.
I need to hoist myself up without knocking you down.
Can we stand together, if only to balance for three minutes?
I know what it is for everyone to be watching, even if you think they're not.
Please don't push. Nor will I pull.
We aren't so far from falling, though I know how hard it is to stay on top.

About-Face January 2, 2005

There it is, I had my fun.

You can see that this book is done.

I am sure that the reading didn't take long,

I hope it placed in your heart my song.

Sure enough, you might think some of this stuff is trite.

All I know is I feel a lot lighter.

Thanks for reading!

About the Author:

David M. Schwartz was born and raised in the St. Louis County, Missouri 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. Since late 1999, he has worked in the computer field, trying to wed his technological and people skills with both disastrous and amusing results.

This book was self-published by David M. Schwartz.



I could never stay inside the lines when editing pictures. This is me around age 3, before I was thrown out into the world, specifically high school and seeking my living on my good looks and humble poetic abilities.



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“If you think you’ve got problems now, just wait!”

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