



Poems
for
Family
and
Friends

Justin Spring

Sarasota Poetry Theatre Press

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for Family
and
Friends**

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A SOULSPEAK E-BOOK

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Author's Foreword

Some fifteen years ago, my friend Cliff Huxford was married for the third time, at age 60 no less. I was astounded. If anything else, it seemed to merit a poem, but I was somewhat dubious about my ability to write a *poem of occasion*, as my poetry is quite unconscious and usually unresponsive to my conscious needs. Yet, to my surprise, the Muse delivered, and the poem turned out quite well:

Hux Is Getting Married

Here it is, Santa Monica, I told you.
Hux's place is just down there, past that hill.
It's like a stack of boxes, full of surprises.
Some movie actor lives downstairs.
His girlfriend too. I saw them
lifting weights one night.
Lea?
Lea's thoughtful, soft.
It's going to be a good marriage,
Hux's third I think. He must be close to sixty now. These late
marriages: the wedding nights must be so odd.
Desire?
Of course desire, it's always there.
But something else, a kind of awe:
all those years of slowly dying
in singles bars,
and here you are,
starting out your life once more
with someone that you barely know.

Encouraged by the result, I began to think about writing more wedding poems for friends and family, but still being unsure if the Muse would deliver, I used Hux's poem as a model, modifying the particulars to conform to the wedding in question. This accounts for the similarity of many of my earlier wedding poems. Such an

approach may seem a bit on the lazy side, but it was the only way I could be sure of the poem getting to the wedding on time, or to be frank about it, getting to the wedding at all. I should add that it also allowed me to repeat what I felt to be a universal truth, namely, marrying someone you love, but have no way of knowing well, can be a very risky business. My former wives will testify to that.

I abandoned using Hux's poem as a model after I began composing spontaneous oral poems I call SOULSPEAK. I found this ancient method allowed poems to form quite easily, like rock candy around a string. It was almost as if the Muse couldn't wait. I also found that by adopting some of its composing techniques, I could produce original written poems almost on demand. The result is this small collection of poems honoring the births, weddings and deaths of family and friends. I also had the feeling that by using the SOULSPEAK method of composition, which is almost totally unconscious, that many of these poems would turn out to be prophetic. They certainly felt that way as they poured out of me. Only time will tell as they say.

At this stage of my life, time seems somewhat of a blur, so I have no idea when some poems were written. *Many moons ago* is the best I can do. Some poems have dates simply because they were a part of the original poems. Let me also add that the poems are not arranged in any order, or along any particular timeline, so that it may appear in many cases as if time took a holiday, which I wish it would. Permanently.

Unless I depart sooner than I'd like, there will most assuredly be additional poems. I have included in this collection all the wedding/birth/death poems I have written since I wrote that first one for Hux in the early nineties. I have also included some very early poems I had written for my children in the early eighties. They are at times a bit awkward and overly sentimental, as I had just returned to writing poetry, but they have heart, which to my mind makes them worth rescuing. Finally, I included three short poems

about my own life from that same period that I had never bothered to publish, but which seemed appropriate for this collection. I should also note that Scylla Liscombe, my partner in SOULSPEAK, helped me create several beautiful, antiphonal duets, with the responding voice creating a separate poem that also amplifies the main voice. Think of them as of a split personality. Read them any way you like, as two separate poems or as one long interweaving of voices.

I have made changes to many of the poems, as time allowed me to detect some faults in rhythm and phrasing that had occurred in the rush to get them out. The poems seem better for it but who's to say. The original of anything has a way of favorably embedding itself in the recipient's psyche. I should also add that despite my misgivings about composing *poems of occasion*, some of them seem as good as anything I've ever written, which makes me feel especially good about this particular collection.

Finally let me say that if any poem was omitted, I am sorry. I have gone through several generations of PCs (and disk crashes) so it is a wonder anything survived. Thank God I usually squirreled away a paper copy. If a birth or wedding took place I wasn't aware of, all I can offer as a defense is that the ability of this family to multiply itself has often outstripped my ability to keep up. As for the deaths, they seem to have a way of making themselves known, don't they?

Justin Spring
November 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Hux Is Getting Married.....	9
For Michael and Christine	10
Wedding Engagement,	11
For Natalie Jo.....	12
Cameron is Born	13
Stasia's Getting Married.....	14
A Poem for Kalyn.....	15
Love Doesn't Care	16
Kelby's Graduating Sixth Grade	17
For Christine.....	18
You Have To Change Your Eyes.....	19
We Go to David's Wedding.....	20
Lizi Is Getting Married	21
George Is Getting Married.....	23
Art.....	24
Francis Is Getting Married.....	25
Poem for Scylla	26
For Peggy Pearson	27
Duet For Peggy Pearson.....	28
Rosie's Dream	29
Duet: Rosie's Dream.....	30
For Ryan	31
Nicole Is Getting Married	32
Clare Just Arrived	33
A Portrait Of Little J. S. In A Prospect Of Coins.....	34
Larisa Is Getting Married.....	35

For Alex The Cat	36
Duet for Alex the Cat.....	37
Erica's Getting Married.....	39
Craig's Getting Married	40
POEMS FOR MY CHILDREN	41
College Visit.....	42
Easter Play At Mother Cabrini School.....	43
Margaret: Three Movements	45
THREE SONGS FOR MYSELF	48
First Craft.....	49
How the Poet is Feeling of Late.....	50
The Poet Explains Certain Poems of His.....	51
ABOUT JUSTIN SPRING.....	52
WEB LINKS.....	53

Hux Is Getting Married

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It's like a stack of boxes, full of surprises.
Some movie actor lives downstairs.
His girlfriend too. I saw them
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Lea?

Lea's thoughtful, soft.
It's going to be a good marriage,
Hux's third I think. He must be close to sixty now. These
late marriages: the wedding nights must be so odd.

Desire?

Of course desire, it's always there.
But something else, a kind of awe:
all those years of slowly dying
in singles bars,
and here you are,
starting out your life once more
with someone that you barely know.

For Michael and Christine

May 27, 2006

I was thinking about your wedding last night
and then I was thinking about you and then
I was suddenly high up in the sky
floating through the soundless dark,

which is where I spotted you
climbing through the stars
as if they were windows.

I remember thinking
how swiftly you both moved,
like angels, and then I remember wishing
I knew something about Love,
something that might guide you,

but all I can tell you
is that whenever I see
the two of you, lone, in a room,
talking to each other,
everything stops.

All I see is light.

It is like music.

It is all around you.

Everywhere.

Wedding Engagement,

February 18, 2006

For Margaret and Mark

Today, for some reason,
I see you not in the city,
but somewhere in the country,
somewhere with horses and barking dogs,
and fences where there should be fences.

Mark must
see it too. He's already standing
up on one of the horses like a
circus performer, shouting:
Hey, pay attention, this isn't easy you know.

And,
of course, you're right up there with him,
blowing kisses and whistling
at the crazy jumping barking dogs
who keep leaping through
the big O of your arms
like a hoop on fire.

Maybe
the others see it too. I hope so.
You have to look at life a certain way
to see it's not quite what you see.
I know the dogs and horses do.
They wouldn't have anything to look forward to
if they didn't. Nor would I. Nor the two of you,
who have grown beautiful beyond words.

Love,
Dad.

For Natalie Jo

Sometimes in my dreams, small, naked babies
are dropping from the sky like
slow-opening flowers,
like you, Natalie,
who have come here to blossom
on the prairies of our dreams,
new, and tiny, and fragile,
and totally unafraid
of all that is racing towards you
faster than the sound of hooves,
faster than the darkening sky,
faster than anything
the mind can hold,
but not as fast
as the sound of Love, Natalie,
which today has no sound
but the sound of your name.

Cameron is Born*August 2002*

Sometimes in my dreams, I hear
a child crying, but the child
doesn't know why. He doesn't know
he is about to be born, nor does he know
his fate is already unfolding inside him
like a snake with no eyes.

That child is you, Cameron.

If I could, I would tell you
you have come to be king,
or to exceed all men in wisdom,
or to struggle in the streets
against injustice,
but only the gods know that.

Only the gods
know your one true name.

All I can tell you is this:
you are but one more small wave
breaking on the bright beach
of the world, and those of us
who have been standing here,
waiting for you,
will honor you always
for having set out
upon the unforgiving waters
with nothing to guide you
but the sound of our singing,
and your own desperate cries, rising
and falling in the deepening light.

Stasia's Getting Married

Sometimes in my dreams,
I am with you, Stasia. We are lost
in a forest of light: two small shadows,
slipping along the floor of heaven,
trying to find our way home.

I whisper to you:
Our bodies are like empty rooms.

And then you, laughing:

*Listen to me Tio,
that is because*

we have nowhere to go.

Imagine we're not lost.

*Imagine we're in a garden
where no one gets lost except God:
nobody Tio, not even you.*

*Now, imagine the shrubs are trimmed
like little geese and little fishes
and that the garden is in Gamboa
and it's Saturday, January the Eighth*

*in the year of Our Lord Twenty-Two Hundred and Five
and I'm standing at the altar*

*of La Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo
marrying the dashing handsome Raul Cochez Maduro
against the desperate wishes*

*of His Majesty the King of Spain
and the Seven Sorrowful Sisters of Doom,
who are on every street corner, watching me like flies.*

Imagine that if you will.

So I did. I imagined it.

Then I had somewhere to go, Anastasia.

And so did you.

A Poem for Kalyn

Sometimes in my dreams,
I am a yellow bird,
sitting on the window sill
of a small white room.

A tiny pink baby is crying inside.
She is alone, curling and
uncurling with hunger.

She is hungry for love.
She is hungry
for the world
waiting for her
to blossom into beauty.

Love Doesn't Care

For Brittany, Graduation, May 2005

Sometimes in my dreams,
I am slipping along the crack
between the two worlds,
and you are suddenly with me,
except you don't know why.

You're embarrassed
I've caught you so easily.
Like I didn't even try.

You thought you were all alone,
flying high above the forest, but
I was watching your eyes.

I hate to tell you this Brittany,
but there's no place to hide anymore.
Not even the little closet.

There's only the Mountain
between the two worlds
that no one
has ever climbed.

But listen, Brittany,
here's what I really came to tell you:

Love doesn't care.

And it never did.

Kelby Is Graduating Sixth Grade

May, 2005

Sometimes in my dreams Kelby,
I am high up in the clouds,
trying to find you,
wherever you are.

Down below,
the earth looks like
a tiny, blue white marble.

But I can still see you.
Sometimes you are sleeping
like a cat, all curled up,
not moving a whisker.

And sometimes,
you are all alone
on a green field, tossing a ball
up and down, testing your arm,
trying to see how strong you are.

I've always liked
the color of your eyes, Kelby.
They are as kind as a kitten's.

No one has them but you.

No one.

I love you.

Grandpa.

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