

POT AND STICKS

By Charles A. Poole, Edited by Joshua Gray

Copyright 2012 by Joshua Gray

Published at Smashwords

All rights revert to the copyright owner upon publication. Any reproduction of any part of this book in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any informational storage retrieval system must be made with the permission in writing to the copyright owner.

ISBN: 978-0-9851754-4-3

Whatever may be the basis or purpose of my existence, let it unfold
and may my life be seen as a sacred piece of a sacred whole.

~~~

Being dead, piece of cake.  
Dying, a little more trying

~~~

The butterfly counts not months but moments,
And has time enough.

--Charles A. Poole, 29 March 1949 - 24 September 2011

I am grateful to the Poole family and Charles A. Poole's acting power of attorney for granting
me publishing rights for these poems.

INTRODUCTION

Charles Arnold Poole, called Cap by his family and Charlie by his friends, was born the youngest of three children. Poole was afraid of his father's anger and often felt picked on, even though his sister Debbie was the oldest and tried to protect him. As Poole got older, his emotional wounds pushed him to alcohol and drug use. While he made a few close friends, he never felt at ease with people, and he lived much of his life in a small cabin in rural North Carolina.

I first met Poole sometime in the early '90s at a cabin center called Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Although he was uncomfortable around people and liked to keep to himself, he was in a way quite extroverted. He was a loud talker, enjoyed making jokes and laughing at them, genuinely interested in good conversation, and enjoyed a few beers. He also appeared to be quite handy around the place: he could build a good fire and was willing to help out any way he could.

While I genuinely liked him and enjoyed his company, Poole's lack of social skills made for a challenging relationship. For the fifteen years I knew him, our conversations were kept to a select few topics: family, his home, and the English language. Family was fairly easy: he was my uncle by marriage. His home was more interesting a topic. After that day in Black Mountain, he moved down to Marshall, North Carolina, a fifty minute drive from where I lived. He bought some land in the rural mountains there, and lived in a small house, Walden-style. He cut his own wood to heat one room of his tiny house in winter and used a cold stream to preserve perishable food. He had internal plumbing and a phone for emergencies, but few other modern conveniences. His house was perfectly situated in a meadow, surrounded by trees (sticks, as he called them), on a mountain, and set part way in the ground, which provided natural AC in the summer months and protection from the cold winds in the winter. I was quite interested in his way of life. He took a job as a pizza delivery man, but quit after a short time. He went back to it a few times, just long enough to get some needed money in his pocket.

The English language conversation had two main variants: proper grammar and poetry. I enjoyed the former and regrettably, entertained the latter. He would try to engage me in discussions about poetry in general and poetry he wrote, but I did not allow the conversation to go past small talk. He did tell me once that he didn't write a lot of poetry -- he wrote only in sudden fits of inspiration, which came quite rarely but also quite forcefully. In this same conversation he read me a "cute" poem he had written recently, but because it wasn't "serious" poetry, I dismissed him. He wanted to read some of my own work; I had little intention of following through and never sent him any.

Poole's other topic of discussion, though it never amounted to a full conversation, was marijuana. He smoked religiously, several times a day. His habit affected many areas of his life, including the people he befriended and his daily activities. Near the end of his life his back pain prevented him from driving long distances to visit family and he avoided flying because he couldn't smoke Marijuana on the plane.

Over the years his back pain worsened. He disliked doctors, refused to see them, and had no money to see them anyway. Marijuana was truly medicinal for him, as well as pleasurable. When his sister passed away in 2009, he wasn't able to travel to attend the wake. For the last two years of his life he tried Pilates to help his back pain, which seemed to help somewhat, but he continued to smoke, as it was the best remedy for the pain.

In the summer of 2011, Poole unexpectedly went into the hospital and his brother Hoyt came down from New England to be with him. Within a few weeks, Poole died from a massive infection.

As for his poems, I have never seen the original works. A friend of his typed all his poems into a computer, and after reading his work I realized he was better than I had ever given him credit for. He most likely didn't edit his poems. He wrote political poems, satirical poems, narrative poems and dramatic poems. Editing the poems was a bit challenging; I wasn't sure where the line breaks were, or where one poem ended and another began (I have marked separation of poems with ~~~). Additionally, Poole had two peculiarities. First, he enjoyed using apostrophes instead of spelling out the entire word, such as ol', 'midst and tho'. Second, he did not spell out words related to Marijuana, but instead used dashes. I edited the former peculiarity and left the latter one alone. He also employed a pun every now and then.

His poetry at times reminds me of Ernest Hemingway in its colloquial simplicity, at other times Emily Dickinson in its cadence, meter and rhyme. Another similarity to both poets: he rarely titled his poems. Perhaps this is a common practice for poets living reclusive lives. For a socially awkward hermit whose primary communication tool was jocular, Charles A. Poole had something to say.

POEMS

On the Male Condition

Sure, mind is important, a necessitude in fact.
But nothing without a bit of bone in the back.
Some spine is fine for making a start,
Though it goes nowhere -- minus care of the heart.
Now the heart can beat furious, brave and true -
All for naught sans some intestinal glue.
And steel aplenty amidst abdominal walls
Don't mean a thing if you ain't got the balls.

~~~

Do you want the truth  
Or the convenient lie?  
I can say what's what  
But I can't say why.

So do you want the snake  
Or his underbelly?  
Shall we make it jam  
Or shimmering jelly?

Shall we look at the coin  
Or the cunning fake?  
Shall we cut the crap  
Or ice the cake?

~~~

There's a wheel within all wheels.
It's many and one.
And none. I suppose.

This wheel doesn't run straight –

Axled and true, the Phoenix of the wheelwright's art.
It sometimes turns shuddering and shaking
Askew and a-camber and barely limping and loping
Like a mule on the way to its dusty death.

But turn it does
And on it goes.
A wheel
Sometimes spinning free
Sometimes turning tortuously.

~~~

### **We Are Beams of Sunlight**

We are beams of sunlight  
We are clods of earth.  
We are hastening toward our death,  
We are struggling for rebirth.

The glass is but half-empty.  
The glass is half replete.  
There is agony in victory,  
There is release, surcease, in defeat.

The crowning glory of our lives  
Might be to stand again.  
The compassion for a fallen bird  
May eclipse the glory of Napoleon.

My little ditty is ended  
My doggerel is through  
I'm an undone canvas in the hands of God  
And in the hands of you.

~~~

Healing

Stifling anxiety insinuates impending doom;

A jet will crash or an ocean liner go down.
But his train wreck has already occurred;
People crawled from this wreckage, tangled and torn,
Twisted from love deferred, choked with imploded anger,
Wracked by despair and agony and madness.

Yes even madness! And those poor crazed survivors
Crawled away, their souls hemorrhaging,
Their bodies and minds in excruciating pain.
Somehow they nursed themselves back to life;
For surely there was no one available to tend, to care.
And though they no longer crawled twisted from the wreck
They were crippled and poor in spirit.
And what should have been the glory of love
Was only an aching emptiness.

Nowadays we have come to a great ocean of healing,
And prostrate ourselves on its beach,
And warm ourselves by the light of a new sun.
We mirror ourselves in each other's eyes;
And we know ourselves once more as beautiful and free.
All this has happened. The mists are closing in.
It is not revealed what will be.

~~~

They've stolen the Earth  
And are renting it back  
Very dear, my dear,  
Very dear.

They're paving the planet  
And painting it black  
Very dear, my dear,  
Very dear.

And once they're done  
We can't get it back  
Very near, my dear,  
Very near.

~~~

I followed the path,
The slippery slope,
That led to the brink
Of the abyss.
The edge of madness!
And there I teetered
Til a gust of wind
From a closing door
Pushed me over into the
Maelstrom.

~~~

An apple a day  
Keeps the doctor away  
An apple of the earth  
Assuages rebirth  
A pomme de terre  
Brings truth to bear  
Weavers of tales  
Brings apples in bales  
An apple in the fist  
Keeps out the psychiatrist  
(Or the podiatrist)  
Apple computers  
Shuffle commuters  
And apple oat bran  
Makes a regular man

~~~

If you've got what you need
You're a rich man indeed
If you've that times two
Then God bless you
If you've that times a gozillion
May your blood run vermillion


~~~

John Doe was 33 years old today.

He's been smoking pot since he was 17 and really doesn't want to quit. It hasn't been such a great life. Was it the negative vibrations of his parents' divorce that jarred his early psyche? Probably. And then getting his girlfriend pregnant accidentally-on-purpose at 16 didn't help either, but that was probably effect rather than cause. Watching his mother die of cancer at 18 didn't do anything for his psyche, he had intense nightmares from that. And quitting high school probably wasn't the best career move for a guy who'd gotten A's and B's all his life. And God knows how many acid trips.

Oh, drugs didn't abet the situation at all. He did his time in mental institutions in the early days and was in and out of trouble with the law. But John continued to use drugs. After 11 months in Friends' Hospital in Philadelphia, he had stopped shooting smack and speed. He still loved to smoke p-t, drink beer and acid was not ruled out once in a blue moon. Of course the drinking had become a problem before he knew it. And regardless of what marijuana was doing to his psyche, it wasn't really furthering his social status in a straight world.

~~~

Pipe Dreams

Floating down the river, looking for slaves
We're polling off the banks with hand-out staves
We're breaching the secrets of dark Galon
Having made a wrong turn at the mouth of the Amazon.

Nine weeks betide from Columbia's shore
Bound for Peru wild ropes to barter for
Having a sample on board got lost
As was mentioned before

The captain, befuddled on the fore deck, is lost
His mission is only to cut cost
And down by the fog she's in skulking brouhaha
The mates mutinously discuss capturing the savage Apah

Black witch, white witch, bold gypsy queen!

Each is commander of his privatest dreams
While our vessel lies anchored in mercenary age
A tale of its own proceeds on this page

There on the brink with the king of his race
The one with the magic – it lies in his face
And behind them six million warriors strong
Who chant and grumble and boogaloo all day long

Cap'n says, "Avast and belay there... me bwana, you boss?
Pardon me but we seem to have gotten ourselves lost?"
"ooga dooga dooga dooga do"
(Lookout Cap'n baby, were gonna get you.)

The mate pipes up "Dig it man, don't blow your shot,
We just looking to cop a little p-t
Upon hearing these words the mate did say
The medicine man produced a stick which blew us all away

The sun sets in a breath with a death of gold and blue
Raw instinctual stirrings to an African hue
While the Captain applauds the mates eloquence
Six million natives line up for the dance.

~~~

My mind starts up at some flash  
On the flow of its thoughts, like a brook  
at a sudden liquid note of its own  
That is never repeated.

In the mountain, stillness surges up  
to explore its own height  
In the lake, movement stands still  
To contemplate its own depth.

Sorrow that has lost its memory  
Is like the dumb dark hours  
That have no bird songs  
But only the cricket's chirp

Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hand  
With a grip that kills it  
Wishing to hearten a timid lamp  
Great night lights all her stars.

Between the shore of Me and Thee  
There is the loud ocean,  
My own surging self  
Which I long to cross.

~~~

I remember Mama
Weeding parsley in the garden
On a golden afternoon
I remember Mama
As a gentle tear would trickle down
Her careworn cheek

As she watched us take our first tremulous steps
Into the world of adulthood
But most of all, I still recall her Tiffany jewels
And the swimming pool suntan,
Her Mr. Kenneth once a week hairdo.

Mom's was the name she went by
She was Daddy's chocolate éclair,
I recall the memo she typed us
as she rode in pursuit of the fox in his lair:

It's better to be rich than ethnic,
That's the American way.
Money is the root of all pleasure
Art for arts' sake doesn't pay.
Have opulence, corpulence, affluence, influence,
amplitude, pulchritude, carry and cash
Add status in strata's of high income brackets

Maintain a high double standard,

don't drive and gnash
Two faces are better than one
A friend in need is after your cash
The best things in life have a price.
Copies to daughter and son.

Signed
Mom

~~~

**I Dreamed All the Creatures Were Gone  
(For Alice)**

I dreamed in terror all the creatures were gone,  
The grizzly bear and the trumpeter swan.  
Oh, a few were left – the hog, cow and sheep  
On their factory farms with their vast piles of bleep.

The world was all paved and poisoned and pat,  
The gorilla was gone and though the house cat  
survived, his heart was broken.  
There were long hard roads and no words were spoken.

H--p was gone and though beer a-plenty  
Nothing much mattered because the world was all empty.  
Over a long dead landscape blew a desolate moan  
Across parking lots, where once meadows had grown.

The butterflies dancing and sailing on air  
Were gone. No more. No longer there.  
The thrush who warbled in woods his sweet song  
Was utterly, hopelessly, bitterly gone.

I cried me a river but there was no end  
To the sadness I felt at losing these friends.  
I dreamed my dream and when I came to,  
I opened my eyes -- it was all coming true.

~~~

The voice of wayside pansies,
That do not attract the careless glances,
Murmurs in these desultory lines.

Spring scatters the petals of flowers
That are not for the fruits of the future,
But for the moment's whim.

The butterfly counts not months but moments,
And has time enough.

Days are colored bubbles that float upon the surface of fathomless night.

Leave out my name from the gift
If it be a burden,
But keep my song.

April like a child,
Writes hieroglyphs on dust with flowers,
Wipes them away and forgets.

Memory, the priestess,
Kills the present
And offers its heart
To the shrine of the dead past.

~~~

### **Charlie Powered -- 2010**

I started a compost pile  
What fun in it!  
Kitchen scraps, yard waste  
And, you know,  
shit.

I was riding my EZ chair  
In the shade in the back

Watching the monarch butterflies  
Alight and ascend  
Whirl and tack

And I thought as I sat  
“What could be finer?”  
Than butterflies and compost piles  
In the land of Carolina

The lightning bugs, too  
They like it there  
Until evening comes  
And they take to the air.

They flicker and flit  
And do their old dance  
In permutations  
Of incandescence

And I had to think  
As I whiled away the hour  
The fireflies and the butterflies –  
Why, they’re Charlie powered!

~~~

I don’t want no swimming pool
I’ll dam up the creek
Don’t want no atomic bomb
I’ll turn the other cheek
I don’t need a mansion on the hill
I need neither servant nor slave
A simple flower on my windowsill
Is really all I crave

~~~

The market didn’t crash Today. It burned.  
Gold bullion soup for lunch!  
The ticker tape machine spewed molten lava.

Pork futures were well done.  
Big chief Buffalo Nickel got scorched feet,  
And went off howling into the sun.  
The ghost of George Washington lit his Franklin stove  
With a million dollar bill.  
The firemen rained greenbacks on the blaze,  
Until the flames were smothered by their own ashes.  
And then the entire fire,  
All the smoldering ash and sickening soot,  
Just oozed greasy black smoke  
Into a world of hungry souls.

~~~

To what manner of oblivion are we speeding toward
On this runaway train?
We behave like a world without sea life or great apes or much of anything natural
Is okey-dokey with us.
We behave like a world in which we engage in the relentless pursuit of earth's bounty
While leaving behind toxicity and misery is just okey-dokey with us.
What's the hurry to get there?

~~~

Because a kiss is better than a slap  
And a pat on the back is better than a poke in the eye  
Because kindness and compassion sustain  
And hatred and fear destroy. That's why.  
If you can't distill all the great religions down to a world of peace and kindness,  
What have you really got, anyway?

~~~

As we all know,
March comes in like a lion
And goes out like a lamb.
But are we also sufficiently aware that:
April comes in like a call from your auditor
And goes out like a flower.
May comes in like a warm breeze (spiral dance)

And goes out like a turkish bath.
June comes in like a rose
And goes out like a bonfire.
July comes in like a firecracker
And goes out like a Swedish sauna.
August comes in like a pizza oven
And goes out like an afterthought.
September comes in like an alarm
And goes out like a charm.
October comes in like an invitation
And goes out like an excitation.
November comes in like maiden
And goes out like a harridan.
December comes in like a laughing hyena
And goes out like a saber toothed tiger.
January comes in like an ice cube
And goes out like an ice cube.
And February, dear February,
Short and squat,
Comes in like a puzzle
And goes out like a true love knot.

~~~

The prayer for wealth  
Is answered only once  
In a paisley moon

The prayer for peace  
Is answered even as we speak

So ask for what's possible;  
Don't make God do all the work.



## CHARLIE'S SNIP-ITS

Be cagey, be cunning  
Use artfulness, use stealth  
And take care you don't fool yourself.

~~~

NATE BIT A TIBETAN
BOMBARD A DRAB MOB
TOO BAD I HID A BOOT

~~~

Piling bricks  
But you're not building anything.  
Spiritual flashlights

~~~

The thing about the long run
Is it's such a long l-o-n-g run

~~~

The Tao remained unchanged today

~~~

The sound of my anger
Is great rushing in my ears,
The sound of the universe rushing by
Is greater.

~~~

Not be filled with anxiety and doubt;

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

