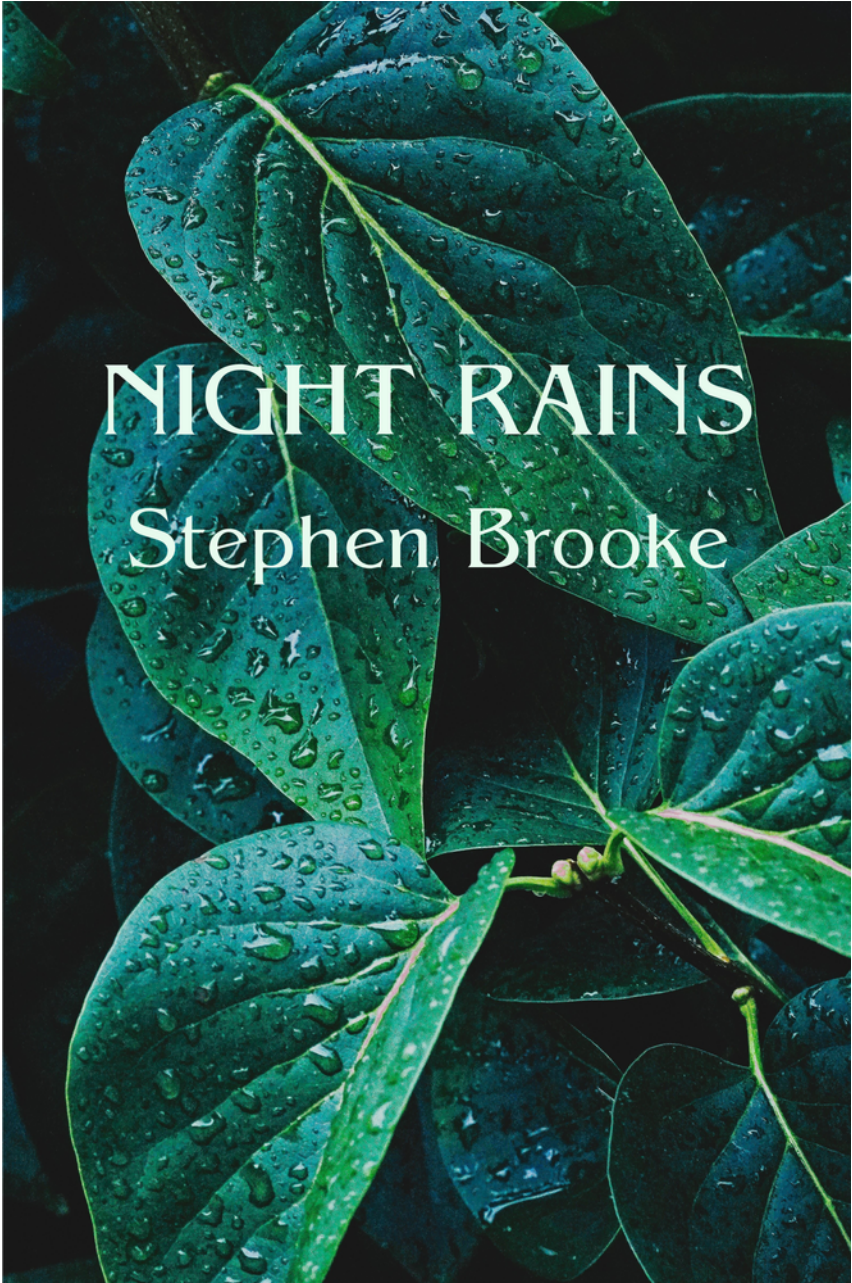




NIGHT RAINS

Stephen Brooke

NIGHT RAINS



Stephen Brooke

Arachis Press 2026

NIGHT RAINS

©2026 Stephen Brooke and the Arachis Press

This work is openly licensed via CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

This Creative Commons license allows the contents of this book to be copied and shared, provided that you attribute it to the author, Stephen Brooke, and include a link to arachispress.com. You may not use it commercially nor change it in any manner. Should you wish to use any material commercially or to create derivative works, please contact us at arachispress@yahoo.com for permission.

Arachis Press

4803 Peanut Road

Graceville, FL 32440

arachispress.com

Some of the poems in this book have appeared in one or another of my novels. Those are all available from Arachis Press.

Night Rains

Beach

Ninth Avenue, maybe, or Eighth —
that doesn't much matter. The Gulf
lies at the palm-shadowed end,
the hours giving way,
the day giving way,
the beach becoming the world
and the world, the beach.
Blinded, we laugh, walking
the startled sand, one compass
as good as another, salt
to left or right and, then,
the other way around.
Shall we swim? Later.

Haze

The soldiers of that summer
did not sing. They had
the radio. They had Hendrix
sending them into
their haze, the haze of a war
that none saw beyond. We watched
them go. We named them to
forget them. Which ones did not
come back? Those, too, had names.
Do you remember them?

Line

Tide and sea breeze
have erased every line
I drew in the sand.
I will make new ones
tomorrow; nothing lasts,
after all, each line is
crossed and forgotten.

Night Rains

As Spring veils itself in mists of rain,
voices swell in soft, subdued refrain,
muted peeping rising from the ponds,
distant rattle of palmetto fronds,

whispered dripping from the shrouded oak.
In the dark, a lone night heron's croak
echoes, fading, on its way toward dawn
where the feeding doe seeks out her fawn,

hidden, dappled as the light of morn
in the stillness of a day new-born.
Every question murmured through the long
nocturne finds some answer in bird song,

as these silent shadows yield to gray,
as the hours of night rains pass away.

*bicycle sits
as I make more coffee~
unexpected rain*

Word-Crow

I pick up sparkly words
and carry them to my nest.
Maybe I'll just look at them.
Maybe I'll weave them into the twigs
of my life and think I've made
something worthwhile,
something lasting.
The winds will decide when I'm done,
someday, someday,
and carry them all away.



Creation

I create to entertain God.
Look at that, He says.
He's imitating Me.
Do you hear Him laughing?

The Centaur

The centaur of Greek legend
is an improbable beast,
or man, if you prefer—
half of him at least.
Take care if you invite him
to your wedding feast;
it's possible you'll find
you have no need for that priest.

Be sure he checks his bow
before he goes inside,
for he may wish to bridle
your intended bride!
She'll contemplate his arrows,
then grow dissatisfied—
onto his back she'll climb
and away she'll ride!

Half of him is human,
half of him is horse;
neither one is likely
to ever feel remorse.
Nor the blushing bride
he did not need to force,
for you were only a man—
a centaur is more, of course!

A Head of Snakes

Was Medusa bothered by
the hissing of her head?
Did it keep her awake at night
as she lay in bed?
Did it irk when each and every
suitor turned to stone,
leaving poor Medusa and
her head of snakes alone?

Was Medusa bothered by
the way her serpents thrived?
Was it hard to comb them out
as they coiled and writhed?
Did she look into her mirror
and wish for a new style,
long for something other than
that same old snaky pile?

Was Medusa bothered by
life with a head of snakes?
Did she curse the little fellows
for all of her heart-aches?
Or come to love her venomous locks
and one day cease to long,
lulled to sleep each lonely night
by their hissing song?

An Ugly Song

I will make ugly music, shriek
disharmonic diatribes into your ears.
Dance to it if you can.

Dance to it if you will.
Tomorrow is in my pocket, yes,
and every promise that lay

hidden around time's curve.
Hidden in the palm of my hand,
beneath the clumsy fingers

that reach for God and find
falling stars in the night.
Falling as far as my mind

can imagine, and no further;
we only dreamed who we were
yesterday. We were children

yesterday, singing tuneless
ugly songs to the darkness.
Did they reach the ears of God?

Audience

We laughed at each others jokes,
the ones no one else seemed to get.

Were we the perfect couple
or just the perfect audience?

The show has come to its close;
we have both gone home.

*my poems ~
as meaningless as
the rest of life?*

Degrees

It wouldn't hurt that much, would it,
if we parted now? Though love
should be unconditional,
total, all or nothing, we know
better. Love comes in degrees
and our flame never burnt so hot
as the fires of memory.

Bow and Arrow

When Cupid draws his little bow
and, laughing, lets his arrow go,
the sensible will run and hide
yet fools like I oft times abide.

And then I spout these words of love,
as though inspired from above,
but every line is still cliché,
like candy on Saint Valentine's day.

It can't be helped, those chestnuts come;
'twould be better were I dumb!
I lose what modest wit I claimed,
when Cupid's arrow is well aimed.

So, should I babble, remember this:
naught shuts me up quite like a kiss.

*the poet dances
with his words, sometimes
stepping on their feet*

Forgotten

Now I lose this dream of you;
now you fade as all dreams do,
whispering as I awake,
what have you forgotten?

Waning with each breath I take,
memory's a moon of ache;
will I some night dream anew
what I have forgotten?

Sunset

Each sun that rises must set,
Each sun that sets must rise;
After the dark of night
Light will fill our eyes.
And in the glare of day,
We may smile or weep
Till darkness comes again,
Till night comes bearing sleep.

Treasures

Tomorrow beat me up
and stole my lunch money;
spent it all on candy
to give the pretty girls.
This one called me 'Sweetheart,'
this one I called 'Honey;'
one took my breath away
when she tossed her curls.

Now I've nothing left
except the memory
of every laugh and word,
each caress and smile.
I may have no fortune,
be that as it will be;
such riches bring contentment
but for a little while.

I blithely let tomorrow
take my every cent;
perhaps a fool and money
do too easily part.
Yet never once I felt
my money poorly spent:
I've treasures of a lifetime
stored up in my heart.

Antiochus

It's all in Maccabees.
We're the Greeks.
They're the jealous guardians
of their God and of their ways.

We have lured their young
to embrace our ways.
Meaning no harm, of course,
but only to raise them

from their ignorance
and stubborn faith.
Let them mingle with us
in the market, at the bath.

Let them leave their narrow
religion and customs.
Apollo and the World Bank
await with open arms.

Another

Just another bomber.
Another kid off to Paradise
on wings of flame.

Does anyone bother,
now, to read the details?

We shrug and go on,
not understanding.
Not able to understand

and relieved
that we never will.

*each tyrant loses
his throne to the next one ~
the world goes on*

*no answers are found
in the words I give you
only more questions*

Sold

We have sold our children
so we may eat today.
It is for your good,
we tell them and our selves.

Obey your masters; learn
to love them, love your slavery.
Who else will care for you
once you have been sold?

Cooperate

in the end
we all cooperate
with our jailers
in little things
we say don't matter
in little things
that make our cells
seem less confining
but draw the walls
ever closer

River

Razor wire in the Jordan,
no crossing to the promised land;
can't reach across the water,
can't ever touch its sand.

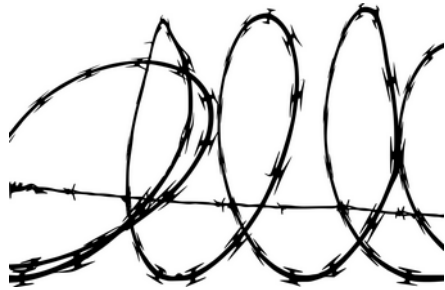
Moon glistens on the metal,
on each sharp sentry strand;
razor wire in the Jordan,
no crossing to the promised land.

The river lies before us,
our dreams have brought us near;
they say we can't go over,
they turn us back in fear.
No water in the deserts,
no water for us here;
the dreams have all run empty,
they've stolen every tear.

Razor wire in the Jordan,
no crossing to the promised land;
they call us criminals,
they keep the fires fanned.
We look across the river,
and try to understand;
razor wire in the Jordan,
no crossing to the promised land.

No wading in the water,
can't reach the other side;
no rowing the boat ashore,
milk and honey are denied.
No baptism in this river,
flowing deep and wide;
as seekers we have come
but your prophets lied.

Razor wire in the Jordan,
no crossing to the promised land;
I can journey no further,
I can only stand,
knowing pain awaits
if I reach out my hand;
razor wire in the Jordan,
no crossing to the promised land.



Angry

Today, I will be angry,
in angry words,
in angry ways.
I will be angry again.

Let me make one more
promise than can ever
be kept. Then you can do
the same for me.

Twice, if you wish,
but not three times.
That's the charm and I
might be ensorcelled

into you. Rather would I
be angry. Leave it at two,
for I will be angry
tomorrow. Yes, again.

*I kidnapped myself
demanding a ransom
I can not afford*

Caverns

Legends they tell,
where the dwarfs dwell,
of fires that well
from the hearths of Hell.

There chains of gold
were forged of old,
to bind, to hold,
in caverns cold,

where the dwarfs dwell.

In secret mines
a captive pines;
and the runic lines
form mystic signs

to tell her tale.
A whisper, a wail,
all voices fail —
doomed and pale

a captive pines.

In caverns deep
the hours creep;
to wake from sleep
means but to weep,

caught in this spell.
Does a distant bell
their passing tell?
Within her cell,

the hours creep.

The clamor, hark,
in caverns dark;
an anvil spark,
a dwarf-smith, stark,

to his tasks settles,
he casts, he fettles*
his magic metals,
the crystal kettles

in caverns dark.

What fate befell,
where the dwarfs dwell?
The hammer's knell
would rise and swell

on the fetid air,
a song of despair
for the captive fair,
beyond all care

where the dwarfs dwell.

Breathe

The line dividing life and death
is measured by a single breath.

Exhale what is and all that might,
a wisp to fade into the night.

When next we breathe, what unknown air
fills souls now past all mortal care?

That dark divide breaks ev'ry bond;
breathe deeply ere you cross beyond.

The Eagle and the Crow

Come join me mates, spoke the crow,
the eagle's flying much too low,
too near our fields, too near our nests
too near the tree where my love rests!
We'll mob him till he flies away,
we'll make that eagle rue the day
he flew too close, only to find
a murder with murder on its mind!

What? said the eagle, I've only sought
to soar the skies with not a thought
of doing harm to any black bird—
the very idea is absurd!
Turn your attention to hawk or owl
or flock on home, you silly fowl.
For eagle am I, king of the sky;
today it is not I who might die.

Threats! cried the crow, and all his mates cawed
to laugh as crows do—not easily awed
by boasts of the mighty. You're no king,
the snide birds sneered, old bald-headed thing!
Then snickering, swarmed the hapless eagle,
to treat him in ways far less than regal
as he beat heavily on his way,
his wish but to be quit of this day.

But claimed the crow, A great victory!
We've sent him packing, yes, just we!
Now all the birds of the world know
none are as wonderful as a crow!
High in the clouds, the eagle heard,
but being a wise (and lazy) bird,
flew on, yet hoping some day unknown
he might meet one of them alone!

Blame

Adam blamed Eve, I do believe,
and Eve blamed the snake for her tasty mistake.

The snake blamed God—how very odd—
for making the fruit, evil's root,

taste so good. Really, could
anyone resist? the serpent hissed.

Adam and Eve both had to leave
to roam the earth, and to give birth

to hungry mankind, still hoping to find
someone to blame—I'll name no name.

The Finish Line

Sooner or later,
we all finish our race—
yes, every one of us,
each tortoise, each hare,
even you nice guys
who come in last.

Wreaths and medals
I have sought,
the kiss of a festival
queen, gowned and sashed,
the crowd's applause
rising to fill me,

and that's all good, isn't it?
But victories pass,
kisses are forgotten;
the finish line remains.
I shall rest a while
before crossing.

*I watch the sun
rise from the sea once more
will it tomorrow?*

Know Nothing

The only thing we know
is that we know nothing,
many a glib prophet
has declared.

Though I know I don't
know all, I know a little
and know that is far
better than nothing.

There lies a great, deep darkness
beyond my candle's glow
but here is light enough
that I can see

and know that I know something
and know that there is more
that I may never know
but might still seek.

Ah, yes, a little knowledge
may be a dangerous thing
but I'll not seek the safety
of dark rooms.

Riddles

What shadow does a shadow cast?
How long does forever last?
Where sleeps the wind before it blows?
Where is love when it goes?

If I passed beyond the sea,
would you wait and watch for me?
If I crossed the mountains high,
would you pray for wings to fly?

Who am I without my name?
Are the gods or we to blame?
Why must dreams fade with the dawn?
Where is love once it is gone?

If I passed beyond the sea,
would you wait and watch for me?
If I crossed the mountains high,
would you pray for wings to fly?

Could a man count every star?
Why are all things as they are?
Do you love me when you sleep?
Answer these or silence keep.

A Glass

A glass of wine may make me jolly
But two can turn me melancholy,
And taking three is simple folly
For I'll fall asleep, by golly!

I'll have one for my stomach's sake,
Though several more seems a mistake;
Too many glasses surely make
Anybody's tummy ache!

Good food is certainly a sign
To pour another glass of wine,
So bring a bottle when we dine:
Fill up yours and fill up mine!

A glass of wine just might enhance
The mood that leads us to romance;
But sometimes we'll make an advance
When we shouldn't take the chance!

*rising early
I sing across the morning
as the birds*

I Who Was Young

Moon of silver, sun of gold,
I who was young now grow old.
Daylight dims, night grows cold,
Should I fear death, I who was bold?

Life is short, forever is long,
I tried to do right, often did wrong.
Will is weak, wine was strong,
I would forget the words to my song.

Moon of silver, queen of night,
I knew you once, grown full and bright,
And madly I danced, by your light,
But those who danced with me fled from sight.

Last fading stars, by dawn swept away,
I, as you, may no longer stay.
Yet you return, come end of day;
Where I might go, I can not say.

Every road walked, every tale told;
All I then loved I could not hold.
Sun of morning, spun of gold,
I who was young have grown old.

Jewels

I'll hang the moon from a silver chain
to wear beside your heart,
And fashion ear rings of the rain
that drip in subtle art
Against the midnight of your hair
and dawning of your skin —
A glowing, flushing morning fair
with hints of flame within.

I'll set the sun in a ring of gold
to place upon your hand
And kiss your fingers, making bold
but making no demand;
No, only asking for your love,
that you be mine and stay
Each night of gem-starred sky above,
each jeweled golden day.

*all hearts must break ~
pieces of mine have fallen
along my pathway*

The Hermit

I waited, yes, I did, for love,
for that one woman, the one I thought
would be forever—my forever.
And was I wrong to treasure her,

to love her with each breath, each taste,
each touch? I gloried in them all.
The exploration of her flesh,
her soul, her gifts so freely given,

became my life, my work, my pleasure.
Then they were taken from me with
a quick farewell, a do not want
to hurt you but I must move on.

I dream yet of her, still reach out
at night to hold her. Nothing; no one
to share this bed, this bed that was
once ours. It ever will be ours

and never will be ours. My desert,
my wilderness, it has become,
the dwelling of a hermit who
repents his folly all his days.



Dark Gardens

I have hungered but I have not starved;
I have worshiped each vain idol carved
by desires sharpened to a knife,
by the fires that have hollowed life,
left me empty of all wants and needs
and the comfort of all empty creeds.

Hollowed now, I leave myself unguarded,
followed by those dreams thought best discarded;
facets of perception catch and bind me
as kaleidoscopic visions blind me.
Rise up every star I wished upon;
to dark gardens comes unruly dawn.

Whisper to those fading lights above,
what of those we need too much to love?
Owls cry messages across the night,
ask what litanies I might recite —
shadowed prayers for sins too small to number;
in dark gardens I and they seek slumber.

Ring

The ring has gone to the fire,
the dark lord Sauron is gone,
but in his worshipers' hearts
his evil has lived on.

The orcs now march in the streets,
they're building Mordor anew;
and if a king's to return
it must be me and you.

Around us rise high the walls
of hatred and of strife;
what hope for we who had dreamed
of a peaceful hobbit life?

The ring may go to the fire,
in each new guise meet its doom;
but what hides in human hearts
no fire can consume.

*the light at the end
of the tunnel shone briefly
and was gone*

We Await Yuletide

And now the longest night has come
upon the hills and fields of home;
here by the friendly fireside
we await Yuletide.

The Day of Darkness nearly done,
tomorrow promises the sun;
though Winter's winds yet howl outside,
we await Yuletide.

Air cold and hard, the sky stands dark
and winter trees sleep leafless, stark;
as snow still blankets countryside
we await Yuletide.

Now sing the carol, drink the health,
the gold of dawn shall be our wealth;
here by the warming hearth inside
we await Yuletide.

On a Night

On a still and starry night,
was a baby born;
and the shepherds sought his light,
the light of a new morn.

On a starry night, and cold,
they rose and left their sheep;
Was it only to behold
a little child, asleep?

On a night when simple men
knelt at a simple birth,
was swept away all that had been;
the breath of life filled earth.

On a night, a wondrous night,
when the angels sang,
the stars shone in their glory bright
and the heavens rang.

Skies

Ghostly moon, in skies of day,
who notes your passage, asks your way?
Only children, who delight
in such — to them — a novel sight.

Let me ask then, if I might,
what if the sun crossed skies of night?
Would we gaze up in dismay?
Fall to our knees, begin to pray,

asking God to set things right?
Or laugh, as children, in its light?

*did belief leave
all at once or was it
a gradual thing?*

*I didn't notice until
everything was gone*

Sing in God's Sight

Jump with joy
Dance with delight
Sing to the sun
Sing in God's sight

Laugh and love
With all your might
Celebrate day
Glory in night

Look to the sky
Full of God's light
Sing to the stars
Shining bright

Exult with the clouds
Gray or white
Dance with the wind
Come what might

Bless this morning
For all is right
Sing to the world
Sing in God's sight

Cross

In every child I see the second coming,
god made man again. His cross awaits.

We each climb Calvary, eyes averted
from this destiny. It stands against

our sunsets, stark; its shadow is our road.
Stride forward, Sister. Do not hesitate,

my Brother. It is a moment's work to lay
ourselves down. The beat of the hammer only

echoes the beat of the heart and both
will cease in time. Pray there is no third day.

*no secret password
whispered in an angel's ear
opens heaven's gates*

Faith

You speak of faith, and faith you have
that one awaits you in the night;
yet in the dark, that drowning depth,
does anyone have faith in you?

You hope for rest, eternal rest,
release at last from troubled life,
but it may be, in that beyond,
you ever wander unlit ways.

Mistakes

The world is full of idiots—
I, alas, am one;
to my long list of mistakes
add more before I'm done.
For to err is very human
and I'm far from divine,
but make no mistake, I do admit
all those mistakes are mine.

Jokes

God laughed. I couldn't say
which Person started first
but I'll bet it was the Spirit.
She has a sense of humor.

Naturally, the angels joined
in, though they weren't
sure just what the joke was.
Folks on earth looked up

and smiled and way down deep
Ol' Scratch was puzzled.
Are they laughing at me?
he wondered, ever the suspicious sort.

That's what got him in trouble,
you know, always thinking
he should be on top of whatever
was going on. No matter how bright

he shone, he couldn't cast a light
on God's mind. Oh, no, some things
are beyond even an archangel.
And God's jokes are among them,

at least for those too busy
measuring their own world
to see any other. Count the stars,
friend; count until you fall asleep.

Nest

I'm a bird that has no wings
never flies, never sings,

lying broken on the ground—
fallen here and never found.

Don't return me to the nest;
I can not sing. I'll soon find rest.

Goats

a verse retelling of the fairy tale

There was a troll lived 'neath a bridge,
and three goats, high on a ridge,
who'd eaten all the grass at home
and concluded they should roam
in search of pastures green and new—
that one across the stream might do!
Said the youngest, "That could be.
I think that I shall go and see."

Off he trotted for a look,
he'd take that bridge across the brook,
but as he set down just one hoof,
the troll asked, "Who walks on my roof?
Is it someone made of meat?
Is it someone good to eat?"
"Just a goat, and very small,
you wouldn't care for me at all!

I'm not enough to fill your tummy—
wait for someone who's more yummy.
In fact they're coming right behind,
so I'll go if you don't mind."
And with that he quickly ran
to the far end of the span.
"He truly was a tiny kid,"
mused the troll, who promptly hid

to await the next in line,
certain he would taste quite fine!
Then he heard footsteps overhead;
"Now at last I will be fed,"
said he with a snarl and growl,
for he was a troll most foul.
"Who dares to claim the privilege
of sauntering across my bridge?

Is it someone made of meat?
Is it someone good to eat?"
"I fear I'm rather stringy, alas,"
said the second billy to pass,
"In truth, I'm scarcely worth a bite,
I'd only spoil your appetite!
A goat much bigger in all directions
would surely suit your predilections,

so take a look and you will find
one is coming right behind.”

“I suppose that it is wise
to wait for someone with more size,”
allowed the troll, now eyeing the third
billy coming to join his herd.

“Wise, indeed,” agreed the goat.

“Why, that should be a well-known quote!”

And saying, ‘Excuse me, I can’t stay,”
he hastily traipsed upon his way.
The largest goat then clomped across;
“Gosh,” said the troll, “he’s big as a hoss!
But he’s someone made of meat,
there’s lots of him to eat and eat,
he’ll do for both my dinner and lunch
and maybe a midnight snack to munch.”

Onto the bridge he made a great jump,
and stood there, a hideous, menacing lump.
The goat, who truly was quite large
lowered his head and made a charge,
with baleful eye that glittered and flashed,
with great curving horns that solidly crashed,
the biggest billy sent the troll bowling,
over and over the troll went rolling

until he ended up in the water,
and the goat he'd hoped to slaughter
ambled across the bridge, serene,
to join his friends in fields of green.
Lamented the troll, "This is the worst!
I should have eaten the second or first."
A moral? I think there must be one
or even two but my tale is done.



Giants

Giants don't watch where they step;
their focus is not on the ground.
You might yell, 'Hey, we're down here!'
but those giants won't hear a sound.
They flatten what lies in their path,
and thump on wherever they're bound;
so make sure your house isn't built
where giants might be around.

Giants don't watch where they step
no need when one's that big and strong.
They amble with heads in the clouds;
they bumble and fumble along.
You may not know one is coming,
till you hear them roaring a song,
so if they do step on your house,
they didn't mean to do wrong.

Nothing in Common

I've nothing in common with you, my dear,
nothing in common at all;
You are the blithe springtime of the year
and I the cold wind of fall.

I've nothing in common with you, I fear,
for as you may well recall,
I'd far rather sit and drink my beer
while you yearn to dance at the ball.

I've nothing in common with you, and here
most likely is what would befall
if we were to whisper in a friend's ear —
you'd charm and I would appall.

I've nothing in common with you, it's clear,
the differences are not small;
indeed, I am inclined to cheer
at moments when you might bawl!

I've nothing in common with you, the mere
thought of you, perfect and tall
reminds me wherever I might appear,
folks tell me I make their skin crawl.

I've nothing in common with you, my dear,
and yet I long for your call;
no, nothing in common with you, my dear,
nothing in common at all.

Fools and Audiences

Love is for fools, I tell
this crowd. They never believe.

Not that girl in the front row,
making eye contact.

She'll go home believing
I made love to her all evening

when each song was no more
than public masturbation.

Love is for fools and audiences.

Pursue

I followed my heart, but it told me lies
nor could I put trust in my own two eyes;
reality names itself in some new guise,
each promising its more elusive prize.

Yet when I pursued the fools' gold that gleamed
along some lost border of dreams left undreamed,
naught ever turned out to be as it once seemed;
all offered in hostage remains unredeemed.

Too easily have I been oft misled
by those empty words I myself have said,
as I set illusions to dance in my head —
pursuing tomorrow as it ever fled.

Reach

Entitled to nothing,
we have no innate right
to do more than exist.
We but reach forth,
grasp and then relinquish
as we return to nothing.

I, the Unicorn

The unicorn, as one can see,
is not a horse, nor will it be;
my cloven hooves and tufted tail,
my little beard say without fail:
Equine I'm not; I am a breed
that has sprung from a different seed.

In naming me, perhaps you'd hope
I'd prove to be an antelope;
albeit with a single horn—
that is what makes me 'unicorn!'
But I'm elusive, scarce a glance
is had by mankind, save by chance.

And they shall not identify
the unicorn though they may try;
I graze upon the meadows far
away in Faerie, lands that are
beyond the reach of mortal men—
as I'm beyond all mortal ken.



Locus

A wizard needs the proper locus
if he is to fully focus
on his spells and hocus-pocus.

He must have his place of power,
a lonely room high in a tower,
to call up demons that bow and cower!

They obey his every command—
at least those they understand—
they are his left and right hand.

So look away on a moonless night
when you spy the wizard light,
high and distant—a frightening sight!

To Know

To know everything is to be God.
To know nothing is to be nothing.
To know something is to be human.

Snake-Eyes

Einstein was wrong—
God played dice last night
and lost me when he rolled
snake-eyes. He kept betting

on three. He has a thing
for that, you know, three persons,
three days, even three
wise guys from the east.

It seems odd for someone
who is infinite.
Yeah, God lost me last night
and passed someone else the dice.

*lead or follow
we all travel toward
the same end*

*I take a moment to rest
and watch traffic pass by*

Slipping

My finite mind cannot hold
the boundless me I enfold;
I am of heaven and of hell,
yet captive to this mortal spell.

Slipping sideways into you,
somewhere, sometime, I break through
the borderlines of false and true,
love and hate, old and new.

Eternity fades to night
from the moment's feeble light;
my shadow falls here and there,
I walk in faith and in despair.

Slipping sideways, seek anew
somewhere, sometime to break through
the borderlines of false and true,
love and hate, me and you.

Forever turns an endless wheel;
what might be is made real.
Variations on a theme,
we are adrift in God's dream.

Journey

I do not know the purpose of my journey,
nor what may be its destination;
this does not mean there is none.

Further down the road I may learn,
or on the far side of the hill.

I have been shown where my road begins;
only by walking it can I find its end.
Travel with me till our paths diverge.

Each of us makes our own pilgrimage;
the road and the journey are one.

Answered

Blossoms whispered wordlessly in the trees,
only to blow away unheeded.

The sun spoke upon the distant peaks;
green forests murmured in summer's valleys.

Every question we set aside, forgetting,
is now answered by the falling leaves.

at last

at last, my friend —
you have plodded behind me
all the long day

come walk now at my side
as we finish our journey

beyond the hills
the sun has gone to rest
among the shadows

Deep Grass

what might I seek
if I am seen to wander
across the hills?

it is no great matter ~
I have lost only my way

I may find it hidden
somewhere in the deep grass
of yesterday

Fire, Fire

Fire and fog — what morning is this,
wandering the roads? What day?
Too young for a name. Too distant, singing
words it can not understand.

Mist and music — what birds huddle
behind the dawn, shiver gray
and silent? Learn these. Forget them along
winding chiaroscuro puzzles.

Fire, fire. Call the sun
to me. It can give my name,
hidden just beyond a hazed
horizon. I hear its song at last.

*we should have parted
in those last happy days
of our summer love*

*the winds of autumn carry
away we who tarried*

Review

Our lives begin and end
in medias res, skipping
prologue and denouement.
I can give the author
no more than three stars.

*my last poems
may be spoken this year
or some other*

Me

Neither this poem nor the last one
is about me. Tomorrow's poem
won't be about me. Somewhere between
pen and paper, I am lost
and some other poet takes
my place. I am not sure if the poems
are about him either. Maybe
he just makes it all up, huh?

Then Lament the Gods

When Ouroboros has consumed itself,
When time has swept away both man and elf;
When last the sun falls from a starless sky,
Then lament the gods, who can not die.

When memory holds naught but fitful dreams,
When naked, howling terror gibbers, screams;
When darkness echoes each despairing cry,
Then call out the gods, who can not die.

When life becomes a burden, breath by breath,
When all but they are swallowed up by death;
When every fading prayer asks but why?
Then lament the gods, who can not die.



Mankind Was Yet Young

A tribe of two we were,
through long glacial night;
a cave become our world,
our sun the fire's light.

Entwined in robes of fur,
bodies pressing tight;
cold winds howled and swirled,
this our one birthright,

to live and die and love
when mankind was yet young—
all this was enough
when mankind was yet young.

*I draw a line
across eternity
and name it 'now'*

The Time of Dreaming

In the Time of Dreaming, in the ever Now Time,
in the dawn and sunset dwells the Rainbow Snake.
From the darkened places of deep springs Snake rises;
arching through eternal skies she calls the rain.

In the Time of Dreaming, Snake creates the valleys;
where she passes rivers run between the mountains.
Where she rises springs bring water to the deserts,
bring life to the world from deep hidden places.

In the Time of Dreaming, Sun sends thirst to slay men;
water holes hide from him and his burning spears.
Then the Snake awakens, hears her children crying,
hears the men and women, hears the trees and grasses.

In the Time of Dreaming, torrent-wrapped Snake comes,
coiling, writhing, dancing in the rains of storm;
with her tongue of lightning, flicking in the darkness,
and her colors arching as she journeys on.

In the Time of Dreaming, in her cave Snake teaches
all the ways of power, all the ways of magic,
all the ways of woman, all the ways of man,
all the ways of blood are known to Rainbow Snake.

Mother and our sister, father and our brother,
making and destroying, swallowing the sun,
in the Time of Dreaming, in the ever Now Time,
in the Was and Will Be is the Rainbow Snake.

In the Rain

In the rain she heard her mother's voice
and for a moment believed she lived again.
Did not the moon return, return to the night,
return in her own self? Had not the seasons
come in their turn, the cold, the fruitful
times of birth and growth? All things, she thought,
all things. The nursing baby, the blood of the hunt
and of the woman. Could it all be one?
Speak, again, my mother, she murmured,
falling into sleep. Speak in the rain.

Moon and Sun

Born of Sun, Born of Moon,
prophesied by ancient rune;
gold and silver, day and night,
journey now into the light —
Moon and Sun and day begun.

Child of Sun, Child of Moon,
grown tall in the light of noon,
will you choose to name your name,
rising up to make your claim?
Moon and Sun and races won.

Blood of Sun, Blood of Moon,
each tomorrow fades too soon;
promise made and promise broken,
shadowed truths remain unspoken —
Moon and Sun and life be done.

*the universe shrugged
but it only shook loose
a star or two*

Cautious Man

Call me Cautious Man.
My super-power is to see
the flaws in every plan,
what can and will go wrong.

I flew over you, once,
enumerating the dangers,
and traveled on, traveled
to my solitary fortress,

thankful that I had escaped.
Cautious Man's adventures
are like that. I'd advise
against buying the comic.

*More and more,
I care less and less
about more and more,
more or less.*

Regret

Regret nothing—
if one thing hadn't happened
another would have
and maybe it did.

We are all in that box
with Schrodinger's furry feline.
Or is it hairless?
I've sought to amaze you

but instead I amuse you.
That's not to regret, either,
when I count up my days
and find one missing.

I'm sure I put it
on the counter to ripen.
Must be those mice.
They'll regret it.

Rambling

This old rambling house
rambles on at odd hours,
conversing with the rain
and wind and ghosts of those
who lived here before me.

It whispers nonsense, I know,
murmured memories
I can not share; yet
I listen, try to pick
out a word, a meaning.

And one of these days
I too shall ramble on,
being none the wiser,
understanding nothing,
my house fading to silence.

*midnight rain ~
I awake and roll over
seeking lost sleep*

Goblins

The goblins are hiding somewhere in your house;
they're spying on you, your kiddies, the spouse.

Nobody will see them, for they're far too quick,
quite likely to disappear in one flick

of anyone's eye, save maybe the cat
(I'm really not certain even of that),

for I suspect mine once did catch a glimpse
of the elusive, diminutive imps.

Her fur stood on end, she hissed and she howled,
but never caught one, though all night she prowled.

Those goblins had melted into the thin air —
that doesn't mean they never were there!

The goblins are hiding somewhere in your home;
they skulk and they scramble, they sneak and they roam.

From this room to that room they search and they seek,
they peer under beds, into boxes they peek.

They're eager for any loose loot they can pilfer;
look out for your jewelry, your watches, your silver!

When things will go missing, I know who's to blame —
the little folk playing their favorite game;

so when people wonder who could be the thieves,
I tell them it's goblins — but no one believes!

Here and There

One place is
much like another, really,
and the people here
are not so different
from those over there.

I didn't like them,
either.

The Social Contract
an Anarchist's drinking song

I never signed the social contract
nor agreed the majority ruled;
and those who thoughtlessly scribbled their names
I consider well fooled!
Yes, fooled they were, fooled they are,
and rightfully ridiculed;
but not me, no, never me,
for I've been too well schooled!

I never signed the social contract,
someone forged my name —
it was my parents, I've no doubt,
and their parents did the same!
And though I'm fond of the dear old folks,
it would be to my shame,
to let them sign my life away
and so I've quit the game!

I never signed the social contract,
with government I'm through;
it doesn't matter who climbs to the top,
they bring us nothing new!
Democracy and majority rule,
you surely know it's true,
is still one group of people telling
everyone else what to do!

I never signed the social contract,
instead I stole the pen;
and if they hand me another one
I'll steal it again!
Refuse to sign, I urge you all,
and the day comes when
we can live as is our right —
as free women and free men!

*I forge my name
on the social contract
becoming no one*

Understand

To understand the novel
one should read, as well,
his poems. The words are there,
those very same words, leaping

over each other on their
varied ways. Some come
when called. Some will run
from the extended hand, knowing

not what we conceal.
Look, it is empty.
Look, I innocent come
to roll these pebbles between

blind fingers, to know what canticles
formed the day. A poet?
I know only the novels,
reciting in the dusk.

It's Good

It's good to be in love, you know?
Even if that heart of yours
whispers, This is not the one,
it beats not being in love all to hell.

Until it ends. Then you ask,
What was I thinking? Why am I
such a god-damned fool? as you
look for love again and maybe

again, and we addicts on the street
of being human will give each other
those fixes and those overdoses.
It's for the high, you know? Oh, yeah,

it's good to be in love. It's good.

*the rain will yet fall
and the sun continue to shine
on my garden*

Keys

Why, one day, did my keys
fit none of your doors?
Did you change every lock
or did I somehow bend

them into these useless
trinkets? They clatter
together now, making
the harsh music of my life.

And did you think our music
sweet? You told me fate
had set us in harmony
and I half-believed it.

Half believed, although we sang
in different keys.

*tracks all taken up
year ago but the railroad
still crosses my map*

Without

A sailor without a tattoo,
An actor who missed his cue—
So am I today.
So am I without you.

A garden that never grew,
A wind that never blew,
Empty of all meaning—
So am I without you.

A tiger caged at a zoo,
A lawyer with no one to sue,
Counting all I've lost—
These things I am too.

A ship without a crew,
A church without a pew,
A man without purpose—
So am I without you.

Prison

Down flights of darkness
he dwells, the angry,
violent man.

I chiseled his cell
painstakingly,
casting aside

each cold splinter
of my soul
to leave only

uncaring rock.

*my opponent's
anger is my weapon
against him*

*he strikes first
I strike last*

Ride

I want music no one can dance to.
Give me five against four, man;
give me thirteen laid on eight.
That's cool with me.

Let me ride roller coaster beats
above an amusement park
of bebop horns.
Let me off the merry-go-round.

Going in circles gets you nowhere
and I've been there, man.
I've been there too many times.
I can't rock and roll anymore.

*I'm not good at playing me.
Could someone write me
a new role?*

To Call

To linger in forbidden gardens,
dream beneath the black rose tree,
to play the tunes for fairy dances
through all night's eternity,
I seek those distant ebon towers,
stark beside a shadowed sea
where misted perfumes of the darkness
rise in writhing ecstasy.

To sleep in ancient haunted ruins,
now inhabited by owls,
to hear the ravenous wolf pack passing,
my heart thrilling to their howls,
I wander unmapped pathways, pushing
through the muck that clings and fouls
to join the maddened monks' procession,
faceless all beneath our cowls.



To call the wind, to send it raving
 through the vaults of fabled kings,
to rouse the songs of ghostly minstrels,
 cold hands on discordant strings,
I speak arcane words of enchantments,
 call upon each star that sings
across the infinite abyss —
 fearing, hoping, what fate brings.

Thank you for reading *Night Rains*. Both older and more recent work is included in this collection, and some of the pieces have previously shown up in my prose fiction.

Stephen Brooke