

*The Quest
for
Enlightenment
and Stuff*

yet another book of poems

by Willie Watson

***This book is dedicated
to my wonderful wife, Helena,
without whom it would never have been
produced. With love.***

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also by Willie Watson:
Paradox
Rheets 2017
Wild Pigs of Fukushima
The Meaning of Life in Easy English
Rheets 2016
Geology
Rheets 2015
The Shit Guru (An Expat's Story)
Rheets 2014
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155 Sonnets
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The This of the That
Tarot Poems (with Marie Brožová)
The Alchemist's Notebook
Four Syllables on Water
The Guru Kalehuru and Other Poems
Poems from Prague

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Introduction

There are many different reasons to write poetry: to entertain, to inspire, to express your innermost emotions, and many more. I went to a poetry reading last night (as I write this) and a young lady got up on stage and said "Most of the poetry I write is when I'm going through some problems and have to work it out, but I don't want to bore you with that tonight so I'm going to read something more upbeat" and I thought that was very decent of her, but she needn't have bothered. Working through your troubles is a perfectly legitimate function of poetry and lots of other people, no doubt, have had nearly the exact same problems, since we're all people, so it would have been valid.

One of the main reasons I write poetry is because I would like to be a world famous poet who gets invited to dinners where I receive awards and stuff like that, but it doesn't look like it's going to happen any time soon. Still, I keep on writing.

There are two main motivations, at this point in my life. One is force of habit. I've been writing rhyming poetry long enough that that's sort of the way I think and I will occasionally bust out with a couplet in the middle of an otherwise normal conversation and people will look at me funny. Not like "Ha-ha" funny, you know, the other kind of funny.

The other, and I began to notice this many years ago, is that I'll be writing a poem about falling leaves, or the fresh white snow, or some damned thing I've just watched on TV, and when I get to the capper line I'll be fiddling around with rhymes just to get something to fit in there and Whammo! Suddenly, there it is, and it's a deep insight I hadn't even thought of, but that's cool. If poetry makes me seem like a deeper person than I am, I'm good with it.

It's all part of that road the Taoists say we should be on, because the journey is more important than the destination and enlightenment is being on the road to enlightenment. So, poetry is my quest for enlightenment.

But, while you get some beautiful insights along the way, there's a whole lot of stuff that's a lot less earth-shaking. I can't look at a short poem advising people to not die on the same day as somebody more famous than they are or they'll be upstaged, or one talking about how Uranus smells like farts, and think there's some important, universal insight there. Nonetheless, if I only included my great poems, this would be a slim volume indeed.

So, part of this book is a quest for enlightenment and a great deal of it is just stuff. Which is which, dear Reader, I leave entirely up to you.

Willie Watson

A Cleansing Wind

Breath is a breeze that moves through your body
your body's the temple that houses the mind
Breathe deep, relax,
let the spirit move through you
Breath is the wind that can help you unwind

On Not Being in the Loop

In the light of the day
you can see things quite clearly
the shapes are precise
or, at least, very nearly
the colors are sharp
and the angles are right
when the sun up above us is shining so bright
But, when it's behind us
(because the world's turning)
we see, in the blackness,
that beacons are burning
we can't see the details
they're really quite far
these millions, and billions, and trillions of stars
It's good to be hip
and to be in the loop
to be down with what's happening
what's going on
to keep up with the trends
and know all the cool songs
to go with the flow
with both style and grace

But, out of the loop
is a much bigger place

The Embers of Patience

The flames can only go so high
and when they die, you're feeling low
there's just the embers feeble glow
just breathe deep, and take it slow
focus on your heart's desire
it won't be long until you're strong
enough to stoke the waiting fire
the embers will ignite, and then
become a roaring flame again

Hybrid AI

The mind is not a computer, the computer is not
a mind
they operate quite differently, they do
but put them both together,
and I think that we will find
a way of thinking that's completely new

Non-Sonnet

I've spent some time, thinking upon it
(a lot)
Most of the things that people call sonnets
are not

The Need for Self-Improvement

If we could be as good
as we are at our best
the world would be better by far
but us at our worst
is what often comes first
and that is a pretty low bar

Tunnels

Like blood cells
coursing through our veins
People walking through the tunnels
to their different trains

Interrobang

The interrobang is not needed
it's a pointless affectation
an ! that's placed behind the ?
explains the situation

On the Croatian Island of Vis

These old stone walls
these narrow streets
that always lead down to the sea
do not change much
from year to year
a skeleton of history
Behind the town
the mountains rise
the ridge that forms the island's spine
the sea is dark
the sky is clear
and thus the island is defined
Every island
is distinct
with its own culture, its own food
its own people
and their ways
their pace of life, their attitude
Every island
is a world
self-contained, a special case
and every planet
is an island
floating in the depths of space

Message Sent

The Internet's humming
The people are sitting
in pods and receiving,
absorbing the images
neurons are firing
sending their signals
down to the fingertips
eager and waiting
to tap out a message
to send to the universe
sometimes it's subtle
and sometimes it's clear
I am here
I am here
I am here
I am here

Shadow Artist

Art is life and life is art
and everything is one
the shadows cast upon the wall
are paintings by the sun

Uniquity

Each fingerprint is different
each snowflake is unique
there are different lines on each and every face
When you do a jigsaw puzzle
of a thousand pieces
each one only fits into one place
It's true of every mountain,
every flower, every tree
and every planet floating out in space
We search for extraterrestrials
out among the stars
and we will find them if we are persistent
but in view of the incredible
number of variables there are
the chance they'll be like us is non-existent

The Bigness of the Early Morning

The sky is so high in the morning
when everyone's still asleep
it seems to go on forever
as high as the ocean is deep
The sky is so high in the morning
when all the world is still
this is what the world looks like
and I hope it always will

The Impossibility of Sonder

Everybody says that everybody's fake
and I know how they feel
I cannot see behind your eyes,
you cannot see behind my eyes,
behind my eyes there's only I,
and no one else is real

The Two Worlds in Our World

There is a world of trees and flowers
Sunshine and waterfalls
Wind and rain
And there is a world of money and power
Anxiety, traffic
Frustration and pain
These world's co-exist
And collide with each other
In every moment, we're forced to choose
If we can't resolve this situation
No matter how much we win, we will lose

Hoarders

Once you start collecting stuff
you can never get enough
but once you throw some stuff away
you'll see that life is still O.K.

The Value of Writing to the Writer

Writing rhyming poetry
for me, fulfills a basic need
because I'm trying to write the kind
of thing I know I'd like to read

I always know that I have done
the very best I could
when I read it back again
and say "Hot damn, that's good!"

The Beauty in Everything

The beauty of the falling rain
Is one of pleasure and of pain
The beauty of a sunny day
Is everything will be O.K.
The beauty of a starry night
Is of infinity and light
The beauty of the rising dawn
Is that the world will carry on

We Didn't Start the Fire

No generation ever knows, the future
that it has in store
but every generation is a victim
of the one before

Draft

A draft of wind may clear the air
or it could make you sick
a draft or two of the golden brew
will likely do the trick
the first draft of a novel
is more than likely crap
and the first draft of a contract
may well be a trap
in the NFL or the NBA
it's how players are employed
but a military draft is something
that you should avoid
there are other meanings,
but it's still a mystery
why the British spell it draught
which looks like drought to me

Permanent Record

The culture of this century
is the first one which will be
entirely, eternally,
preserved
in view of all the things we post
(Look! A kitten eating toast!)
Some is good, but as for most
it's more than we deserve

Ghosts of Dead Words

Languages evolve,
but still remain,
the germ of an idea
that stays forever in the brain

Deliberate, Boneheaded Stupidity

Some people think
some people don't
the worst are those
who can but won't

On Being One With the Universe

If I could be a flower, or I could be a tree
or the water running in a brook so clear
If I could fuse my soul with nature,
how much greater I would be
Perhaps not quite immortal, but damn near

Possession

Our grip is tenacious
A dog with a bone
We are owned by the things
That we think that we own

The High Price of Minor Fame

If you're a little bit famous
Be careful what day you die
If someone more famous than you
Dies, too
There is no second try

Poetic Pitfall

When the rhymes are too close
and the meter's too tight
then the poem you've composed
some may see as too trite

One Way of Looking at an Airplane

Next time you are feeling high
Take a look up in the sky
Your chances are more than fair
You'll see an airplane
Flying by
Way up in the air

There are people inside these things
These metal tubes with wings
Just sitting in their seats
They may read
Or chat a bit
Or sleep, or drink, or eat

Although it is miraculous
They're more or less oblivious
To the fact that they're in the air
And the law of gravity
Which states
That they should not be there

I picture them, sitting there
Feet dangling in the air
Without the plane around them
Flying forward
At a speed
I'm certain would astound them

Though flying has come to seem quite ordinary
To me, it's more than just a little scary

The Effect of a Northern Climate on Mental Health

Dark, rainy places
are thick with depression,
alcoholism, and suicide
the only thing that you
could do to improve it
would be to move somewhere
that's sunny and dry

Memory

We go where we go
and we do what we do
and we see what we see
and all of it's true
we look for the meaning
we find what we find
and then it lives on
inside of our mind

Lava Lamp of the Sky

Some days the sky is clear and blue
Some days dark and proud
Some days a fogged kissed magic mist
or mountains wrapped in cloud
An alien world whirls round us
as we're standing on the ground
and it's whirling and it's whirling
and it whirls the whole world round

Statistical Inevitability

The longer we live
beneath this sky
the greater the chance
that we will die

Mission Extremely Difficult

There are any number of ways in which
A civilization may fall
if we wish to carry on,
we must avoid them all

Watching the Lowering Sun in the Late Afternoon

The glints of sunlight
from the windows
of the building
across from mine
pierce the sky
with brilliant beauty
very nearly
make me blind

As the temperature gets lower
padded footsteps of the jogger
pigeons cooing, then a train
is in the distance passing by
as the world keeps turning round
and the sun is dialing down
the stages of the day are measured
by its place within the sky

Letting Go

It's the irony of our existence
So near and yet so far
It's only when we stop trying to be
that we truly are

The Many Functions of Poetry

A poem can do many things
a poem can entertain
a good one can inspire you
or feed your needy brain
perhaps for provocation
truly, it's your choice
For me, it's just I like to hear
the sound of my own voice

Art or Pareidolie?

The peeling paint reveals a map
and Jesus is on your toast
the cloud looks just like a buffalo
and the wind is the voice of a ghost
Is it art or pareidolie?
Is it art or pareidolie?
Is it art or pareidolie?
Or maybe a bit of both

Our Changing Times

When I was young, there was a saying
(sometimes whispered low)
"If you don't tell anybody,
nobody will know"
Times have changed (for bad or good)
that's just the way things go
and that shiny, little pearl of wisdom
is no longer so

Sweet Surrender

Men! We cannot win this fight
the time has come to cut our losses
just admit that they are right
and let the ladies be the bosses

Perverts

It's hard to fathom, but it's true
they've made it clearly understood
there are people in this world
who truly think that bad is good

Good Viral, Bad Viral

A smile is contagious
It spreads from face to face
As quick as any virus
throughout the human race
it makes us want to smile back
it's such a lovely sight
it leaps across the gap between us
at the speed of light
We should all be ecstatic
With smiles the whole world round
Because a smile is contagious
But.... So is a frown

Advice to a Child from an Old Man

In life, you live through all the ages
If you're lucky, all the stages
When you are a child, you wonder,
what we know that you must learn
So, let me give you some advice
And some day, it will be your turn
First, be healthy. That's number one
Be healthy, be happy
Be nice to people (and animals, too)
And (this is important)
Try to have fun
There will come a day when
You'll look back on all the things you've done
And you'll be happy with your life
You'll have it all, you'll know you've won

Literally...This is not a Joke

Space is vast
our exploration of it
barely has begun
We're still learning
about the planets
orbiting our sun
astronomers learned recently
while focusing their arts
on the 7th planet from the Sun
Uranus smells like farts

World of Words (II)

Words of hate and words of rage
Words that storm across the page
Words of love and words of passion
Word of advice on cooking and fashion
Words that tell all kinds of stories
With metaphors and allegories
Words of wisdom, words of wit
The world of words that has been writ
The world of words has all we need
And all we need to do is read

Talk is Cheap

Talk is cheap
The ocean's deep
The sky above surrounds us
A precious bubble
In the endless,
Emptiness around us

In Defense of Poetic Voice

A poem should have meter,
perhaps even rhyme,
balance and symmetry
and if that sounds like poetic voice,
well, excuse the fuck out of me

Shouting into the Void

If a tree comes crashing to the ground
And no one's near enough to hear or see
Does that falling tree create a sound?
Or is it our perception that's the key?

The question, philosophically, is this:
If no one reads my poems, do they exist?

Prophecy

How will humanity
draw its final breath?
Choking on the gray and filthy air
or huddled up against the freezing cold
or in a frenzy of murder, war, and death?
Whichever way it comes: We have been told

Things We Have in Common

Switzerland has its mountains
and Norway has its fjords
Africa has lions,
it's a thrill to hear them roar
The USA has Disneyland
but when all is said and done
Everyone in the world looks up
and sees the very same sun
South America has its jungle
as wild as it can be
and Europe has ancient cities
with a lot of history
Egypt has the pyramids
the Sahara has its dunes
but we all look up at the sky at night
and see the very same moon
The world's diverse and beautiful
but one thing we should know
is we all live here together
and there's nowhere else to go

Location, Location, Location

There is snow upon the mountains
there is frosting on the cupcake
children splashing in the fountains
there's a fog upon the lake
You can walk along the river
you can wander through the forest
you can live among the people
raise your voice within the chorus
Oh! I love my prepositions!
they keep everything in place
the soup is in the kitchen
and your nose is on your face

The Hunter Moon

The Hunter Moon, the Traveler Moon,
the Moon of the dying grass
remind us of a time, so long ago
The moon up in the sky
was how we knew that time was passing
and the world would soon be covered up
in snow
Now we have clocks and calendars
that measure out our days
and we don't worry much about the snow
but like a mother, patiently,
the moon above's still gazing
Lovingly, on all of us below

Sheep

People often mock the flocks
of sheep as fools, and unaware
I am here to say sheep rock!
They are gentle, kind and fair
They move en masse across the meadow
and reduce the grass to stubble
but they're friendly with each other
and they don't cause any trouble
give us milk, and meat, and cheese
and from their fur we make nice sweaters
show me just one human being
who can do as much or better

The Possibility of Utopia

Utopia is possible
harmony, tranquillity
the only question is
is it within our capability
transition will be scary
so we have to make it smooth
so that when we finally get there
we will all be in the groove
all this conflict, and the shouting
and the ranting and the raves
could end in an explosion
and we'll all be in the grave

A Bubble in Infinity

The waves in the ocean
The surge and commotion
That moves with the weight
Of the whole world behind it
Hits with a shock
And the boats gently rock
They go with the flow
And they don't even mind it

The synchronous motion
Of vessel and ocean
Of matter and energy
Contact and synergy
When there's no distance
So force and resistance
finally meet
and there is existence

Our world keeps on turning
Each 24 hours
The scent of the flowers
Is sent on the breeze
Or perhaps it's their color
Their shape or whatever
There's certainly something
That's drawing the bees

All that exists, is
Sending out messages
Whether or not there's a
Conscious intent
and all that we're doing

And all that is new
Is all in response to
What signals were sent

The things that we see,
All the houses and trees
Come through our pupils
A picture in light
Amazing! Like magic!
This bounty of beauty
This joyous perception
This thing we call sight

And then come the sounds
The music, the laughter
The clinking of glasses
To call the divine
The thrill of the touch
Of one hand to another
The gift of the moment
The taste of the wine

This vast and intricate
Web of perception
each data point of the
Cosmic design
makes its way down
Through the dark, neural pathways
And builds a new world
Inside each of our minds

But Humans are creatures who
Need to communicate
knowing means nothing

If we cannot tell
And so we use words,
Which are made up of letters
And wind up as sentences,
Stories and spells

So we have our books
And our music and movies
And everythings groovy
And everything's right
We look at all we've got
We think we know a lot
Then we look out at the
Sky in the night

As we look out at the void
At the vastness, we
Suddenly see that
We're nothing at all
we're in a bubble
inside of infinity
here on our quant, little
Blue and green ball

All the places we've been
All the things that we've seen
All the people we've met
All the things that we've done
Have all taken place
In sweet isolation
On a
small planet
around a small sun

Portal

As I look out my window
on a lovely, sunny day
at the trees and other buildings
and the hills so far away
as the world goes on forever
and it's then I realize
that the window is a doorway for the eyes

Fantasy's Limits

My connection with reality
is tenuous at best
fantasy is so much more appealing
I wish that I could fly
just like a bird up in the sky
but I never seem to get beyond the ceiling

The Morphing of Matter

The fire's desire
The flames reaching higher
They break, into sparks
Like the waves turn to spray
When they crash into rocks
At the edge of the ocean
When matter is morphing
It's quite a display

Magical Thinking

Magical thinking
Is seen as delusional
But it's a thing that we do every day

We wish on a star,
And we blow out the candles
Some people get down on their knees
And they pray

A wish is a thought
And it weighs less than nothing
But it's the beginning
The seed of a plan

Single celled animals
Never imagined
Eventually
They'd evolve into man

Deniers

There are some who say
that global warming is a hoax
not to be taken seriously
a ruse, a scam, a joke
While smarter folks
are looking for solutions
they've taken up the cause
of more pollution!
(please take note, these people vote)

The Architects of Fate

Birth is the time and the place
where you're born
but the world is large, the world is great
and wherever you go will be
where you have gone
and whatever you say will be
what has been said
and whatever you do will be
what has been done
and that will be your fate

Kaleidoscopic Universe

Patterns, colors, shapes and sizes
Shift before our very eyes
As we wake and as we sleep
Slow, in cycles, and in leaps
The sights, the smells, the tastes, the sounds
That are popping all around
Nothing ever stays the same
Shows, relationships, and games
All evolve, and all mutate
There's no such thing as steady state
Farms and cities, little towns
North and south and up and down
East and west and left and right
Summer, winter, day and night
Men and women, boys and girls
And animals throughout the world
Deserts, mountains, trees and flowers
Change by eons, change in hours
And each of us is in a place
A random spot in time and space
That's in the middle of this mess
And, from there, we try to guess
The nature of reality
But there is just too much to even
Take it in, no way we can
Even start to understand
It's like a big kaleidoscope
And I don't know how we can cope

Time Share Civilization

Some people wake up early
To listen to the birds
So they can let their minds be still
And think without the words
Some would rather sleep till noon
And keep out of the way
And they enjoy the more nocturnal
Portion of the day
The world is overcrowded
So, I think it's for the best
That half of us can be awake
And let the others rest

The Sea and the Night

The sea is vast and goes the whole world round
And there are many people it has drowned
The sea is frightening to you and me
But not so scary if you are the sea
When you go for a walk outside at night
The day is gone, and with it's gone the light
The lines are blurred and all you see and hear
Is colored by the things you truly fear
But look out at the universe at night,
That's speckled with a million tiny lights
The sea, the night, the never ending dark
Illuminated with a billion sparks
The sea, the night, the universe are one
And nothing in the chain can be undone

Roots and Crown

The roots go down into the ground
and there the mighty tree is bound
it cannot walk, so there it stands
it's trunk is sturdy, thick and round

Stronger, by far, than any man
it spreads its branches like a fan
its leaves exulting in the air
according to the ancient plan

It is tall and it is fair
Proud and noble, standing there
Generations passing by
It carries on, it doesn't care

Long to live and slow to die
a friend to all the birds who fly
its fingers reach to touch the sky
its fingers reach to touch the sky

Insignificance

We are at a random place
in space and time, in time and space
and as we wander here and there
across this lovely planet's face
We're breathing in the sweet, sweet air
it doesn't seem to be so rare
and it's the same with time as well
it seems that there's a lot to spare
But, beyond this fragile shell
is space, as cold and black as hell
Here, everything is nice and bright
but after that, we just can't tell
As we stare out into the night
at emptiness, no end in sight
We know the nihilists are right
We know the nihilists are right

The World of Words (III)

We're born into a world
of grass and trees and fish and birds
and based on that we have built up
a world that's made of words

Thoughts and Dreams

Words and pictures are thoughts
and words and pictures are dreams
as everything you've seen and heard
is fed into the stream

The universe of consciousness obeys
the laws of physics, and it stays
the same in case we look away
its limits are quite real

The sun is shining, big and bright
but then the stars come out at night
a million, little points of light
the universe revealed
and in the houses, lights go out
and suddenly we find
the universe of consciousness
that happens in the mind

A View from my Balcony in Prague 8, Autumn

I look out from my balcony
at all the leaves so dry and brown
falling from the chestnut tree
and lying there upon the ground
I look out from my balcony
and see the airplanes overhead
and think of places I might be
If I were not here instead
I see a young man walking and
I think that he is on his own
and then I see that he is talking
to somebody on his phone
The leaves will all be buried soon
beneath the pure and silent snow
and so the cycle carries on
and in the spring, new things will grow
The airplanes flying overhead
the constant, mobile conversations
link the people of the world
travel and communication
I can extrapolate forever
standing here, in this one place
I look out from my balcony
the starting point of time and space

A Small Drop of Water

A small drop of water
that lives in the sea
once was a snowflake
in a pine tree
the rivers keep flowing
the wind's blowing free
we are what we were
and we are what we'll be
there is a prairie
which once was an ocean
and there are still shells there
for people to find
there is a novel
which once was a joke
deep inside somebody's
dark, twisted mind
there once was a comet
which once was a planet
and now it's a stone
that's in somebody's wall
in a house in a village
beside the deep forest
where green leaves of summer
come down in the fall
and Fall's rotten apples
give way to spring roses
the future will bloom
as the past decomposes
and all of existence
is always transforming
there is a rainbow
which once was a storm

Emotional Control

Laughter and tears
are both release
plot and analysis
are containment
in again, out again
in again, out again
in again, out again
entertainment

The Proper Focus

In the race to develop AI
I think that we should try
to worry less about the A
and more about the I

Carpe Diem Con Brio

So many people
Like to say
Carpe Diem!
Seize the day!
Live for the moment!
Be here now!
The future will
arrive somehow
that's not something
we control
be present, and
accept your role
and looking back
is even worse
it's an anchor
it's a curse
regrets, nostalgia?
What are they?
Emotions that
get in the way
But there's a
paradox, you see
with this platitude
this philosophy
the thing that grates
that irritates
just like the pearl
inside the shell
feels the motion
of the ocean
and that forces
it to grow

if you live
inside the moment
then there comes
another moment
and another
and another
moment, moment
moment, moment
till you reach
a quantum level
till you have
achieved momentum
and the future
is upon you
and the moment
you were living in
is suddenly
the past

it is coming
it is coming
and it will be
here at last

When the train
Departs the station
We don't know what
Revelations
What new sounds
And what sensations
Will be waiting
On the way
But the final
Destination

We would just as
Soon delay
But we can't

We can't stop time
And there is no
going back
So, the best that
We can do is
Just to stay
Upon the track

Is that all
We're meant to do
If so,
What kind of
fun is that?

We are creatures
Of intensity
Living in this vast
immensity
we can see the
possibilities
at least we
feel they're there
We are more than
just the moment
there are moments
all around us
there are moments
passing through us
as we're passing
through the moments

Carpe omnibus diebus, vole!
We're like bubbles
which are rising,
swiftly rising
to the surface
and then when they
breach the surface
Suddenly, the
Bubbles burst
and come into
the universe
the vast expanse
of clear blue sky
the world encircling air
and then the day
turns into night
and with the
lowering
of the light
we see the stars
so far away
with lots of room
to spare
and we can see
there is a
whole new
universe
out there

Humming and Drumming

The rain falls hard on a humdrum town
Drumming, drumming, drumming, drumming
Wheels of passing cars go round
Humming, humming, humming, humming
Plinky, plinky, on the pond
On the sidewalk, tappy, tappy
People run indoors to hide
But the flowers and trees are happy

Harvest

The words, the lines
The grand designs
The metaphors and similes
All exist, before we write them down,
as possibilities
The architect
May draw a plan
But first he has to understand
A bit about geometry, and physics
And topography
The farmer doesn't grow the crops
(that city people buy in shops)
alone. The sun, the soil, the rain
work constantly
it never stops
The universe itself creates
A vast array of separate states
from the ways that
matter, energy,
and something else relate
We struggle, and we sacrifice
but all we really need to do
Is write the songs we want to hear
And live our lives in paradise