

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

THE INNER
JOURNEY NORTH

POEMS FROM A MINNESOTA EXPATRIATE

BRUCE HORTON

EDITED BY VALERIE HORTON

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REFLECTIONS ON THE POEMS

by Valerie Horton

we can see so little
of life of love
all ends in sorrow
as sunlight burns us down

This untitled poem (#305) captures the central question at the heart of much of the poetry in this volume. What do we understand about life? How do we deal with love, with death, with loss? For decades, my brother Bruce Horton turned to poetry to contemplate these questions. Most of his poems are short questions, asking something of the universe, and sometimes drawing a conclusion from what he had seen or experienced.

In some poems, Bruce is unhappy and angry such as in poem #310, “whose commands do you heed as hours savagely tear.” But most of his poems surrender to love and beauty, such as poem #240.

great things
i can imagine
more beauty than yours
but not easily
i suppose someone’s smile

BRUCE HORTON

is warmer than yours
at least it's possible
i can dream great things
but few as breath-taking
as you

He found meaning in beauty and many of these pieces touch on the concept. In poem #275 “in beauty”, he says, “go in beauty, for what else is there, that is worthwhile.” Bruce did not see beauty in the conventional sense. For him, beauty was a gestalt of good, peacefulness, and harmony in the Navajo meaning of the concept. Beauty is ever struggling for an internal state of balance while leaning toward goodness. In one poem fragment he touches on his northern roots, saying:

beauty grows across the north
when cold shatters everything
making joy the only hope

He is talking to someone or some entity in many of these poems. He directs his thoughts toward an unidentified person, such as in poem #297: “you watch, don’t you?” or poem 197, “do you remember?” Often the poems appear to be addressing his wife, Emiko, or depending on the timeline, the woman he was seeing at the time. He also frequently addresses the gods, almost always in the plural. Bruce did not have an easy relationship with the concept of deity. In poem #286 he says, “gods’ gifts are cruel,” and in an untitled 2009 poem, he says; “my key to heaven’s door is fake, how else could it be, all roads to gods are lies, written in great letters.” Bruce once told me that he liked the Shinto concept of a thousand little gods and would say, “I hope the thousand

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

little gods agree.” Most likely, he saw god as a force of nature. Being raised a Presbyterian, he could never quite escape early indoctrination into protestant theology.

I thought I knew my brother well, but after studying his writing in depth, I am humbled by the mysteries revealed in his poems. My brother led a semi-vagabond, expatriate, and scholarly life, and yet little of that daily life, appears in his choice of poetic content. These poems do not deal with politics, war, drugs, or alcohol, and they only rarely touch on living across the globe or on his family. He seldom mentions the daughter he loved beyond the power of a poet’s words. Bruce turned to poetry to explore deeply internal and often intensely personal questions and mysteries.

In a 1990 letter he wrote about his poems, he said, “*Probably I have too much ‘ego’ invested in them. If I have a question, I guess it’s whether this kind of nonsense is amusing? As far as I can tell, it doesn’t mean anything, but I enjoyed writing them.*” I find meaning in these poems, and I published this volume to give other readers the chance to share the internal world of one northern man. In the end, these poems continually ask what does it mean to get lost in the awe of beauty, to love, to suffer, or to die? This book is filled with the poetry of a man who remains tied to his northern roots as he journeys ever deeper within while remaining afar.

PART I

POEMS: 1996-1999

The poems in this section are not the earliest Bruce wrote. Bruce began writing poetry in high school, but unfortunately his earlier poetry is lost.



Bruce carved this totem art in the 1980's. He found the picture in a book on the tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

POEMS FROM 1996
AND 1997

the end of a dusty day

we hadn't seen anything for days
and not much of nothing either
but neither was especially surprising
riding carefully through the high desert
for there couldn't be many left after
the last border water decimated the proxies
there's nothing to it, he hollered back
to us, his voice echoing off the sandstone
walls, if you cut across the creek
you can get ahead of it, which is an old
hunter's trick – getting ahead of it and
then leading it past an ambush near neither
with nothing likely to follow along behind
so we dashed out horses across the water
eyes flaming in the setting sun light
barely clearing boulders and dodging trees
galloping madly upstream to where our leader
hid in the shadows of the rare neither

BRUCE HORTON

waiting to pounce as we led it and
instinct pulled nothing merciless along to
a reckoning at the end of a dusty day

MARCH 19, 1997

bound for reform school

i'm sure i can't hear anything, she said
what do you suppose it's up to now?
no good, that's for sure, i replied cynically
anything has never been quiet
when good something good
unless that something had bad written all over it
those two are bound for reform school
she sighed, and so i felt i had to ask
do you want me to check the attic?
no, dear, it's nothing, turning her head
it's come home early today
and we asked it to look

NOVEMBER 17, 1996

NOTE ON POEM: "THIS WAS MY FIRST NOTHING"

POEMS FROM 1998

to retreat

rain falls on an autumn night
 drumming on a nearby roof
 can you make my love clean
 give me a chance to retreat
 and walk with my family
 rain falls are unexpected
 gusts washing trees to the root

POEM 122B
 OCTOBER 21, 1998

[no title]

wherever here is i've been here
 passing through on my way home
 (seeing nothing behind the closed door)
 nothing calls out to the stranger
 past cold faces locked in ice
 we slide our hearts fail to waken
 one step closer to my death

BRUCE HORTON

should i have stopped and tried to break
into someone else's room

1998

[no title]

when you hear echoes in the wind
and strange dreams pull at your heart
you let go more than anything
being safe means being lost
riding fashion into a star

1998

poison woman

poison woman leave my dreams
beauty feeds nothing sane
your glory is my dis ease
nothing i wouldn't do
with everything i would pay
to have those hours with you
a love which was never to be
she merely passed my way
and i drink a bitter wine

POEM 121
OCTOBER 13, 1998

morning dawn

my love was a subtle poison

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gentler than the smoothest wine
it made my head giddy and blind
the earth spun round in the sky
as i danced with besotten joy
crying for the look in her eyes
to wake in the cold morning dawn
dirty and feeling ashamed
no heart can be falser than mine

POEM 122
OCTOBER 21, 1998

quite crooked

a candle tossed into the wind
its fire gone into blackness
forever on the other side
what cruel hand writes our story
ending everything in a slash
quite crooked, pure agony
your face is lost but in my dreams
i expect to hear your voice
but harsh light comes with mornings

POEM 119
SEPTEMBER 24, 1998

e

i am blown by a cruel wind
others have their gravity
i am floss tossed from leaf to ground
you are blessed with a calm beauty

BRUCE HORTON

POEM 118
JULY 7, 1998

[no title]

you are lovely – so lovely no words can say
i love you beyond time and distance
what care i for what came before
you are beyond my dreams awake
i love you more than life itself
you are all i wish to be
i love you, please, please, stay with me
i love you, please, please, stay with me

1998?

like water

it was not the day i prayed for
i burned for you and nothing
dumbs one more than pure desire
much rose and fell between us
we progressed in so many things
that my joy was almost reached
but today was not as i planned
an impatient departing
you slip like water through my hands

POEM 97
MAY 21, 1998

POEMS FROM
JANUARY-MARCH
1999

on the brink

with you the leaves are greener
the sun clearer in its brightness
petals bursting on the brink
as we walk along the river
wind blown hair crossing your face
we pleasure in these hours of spring
and sorrow as linked petals fall
some torn apart by rude gusts
some twirling gently to their end

POEM 127
MARCH 24, 1999

no ends

when do lovers become friends
when does hot ice become water

BRUCE HORTON

do they break up in a flash
or do they join in an embrace
where eyes become a river
where together sees no ends

POEM 126
MARCH 19, 1999

clouded the trains

your breath clouded the train's window
a mask between their world and ours
we laughed inside about your nose
so lovely, so soft is our night
i would it never had to end
a bit of gift from jealous gods
the last station comes so quickly
i hoped for more time together
goodbye our careful ritual

POEM 125
MARCH 11, 1999

in other thoughts

what do your eyes see tonight
do they see me looking at you
my love, or is it at him
are your eyes grey or are they brown
do you pause as i walk by
or are you lost in other thoughts
where do we have our own place

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

doesn't my heart reach out to you
are your eyes only on him

POEM 124
FEBRUARY 26, 1999

beyond years

how can we be so like lovers
caught up in each others' eyes
lost in talk that lasts for hours
wanting to touch and be nearer
but never crossing those hot lines
that lead lovers beyond years

POEM 122
FEBRUARY 10, 1999

count these hours

love, what kind of dance do we dance
social dances spin and end
hot dances melt into the skin
are you building yourself a face
or is it deeper a real friend
or darker yet a shy lover
how do we count these hours of ours
nothing false has been spoken
but will the time count against us

POEM 122A
FEBRUARY 4, 1999

POEMS FROM
APRIL-JUNE 1999

carved from cold

have you ever loved a rock
a bit of nature carved from cold
till morning woke you up
has your mind never wondered
what would be if love was not
a land of bleak grey rock
calmer than the last spring day
my storms offer my love to you
why do i have to cry

POEM 144A
JUNE 17, 1999

the meeting house of death

i am the meeting house of death
are any of us anything else
caught in a terrible dream
living out roles born before us

BRUCE HORTON

blind actors driven to their fate
by words carved in their souls
and my love stands outside of this
she holds me in those brief dawn hours
when i recall who i am
but my dark dreams reach out for her
to curse something merely human
is love any protection

POEM 144B
JUNE 15, 1999

she may be there
i trust only my daughter's hand
all else is lies
all else is twisted thoughts
i will die but she may be there
all else is dreams
all else is bitter wine

POEM 143
JUNE 11, 1999

mad storms
my heart is two sea currents
one flows north cool and rich
with calm and soothing love
one goes south hot and harsh
with winds fueling mad storms
my heart is full of conflicts

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 142
JUNE 10, 1999

the route home

we got lost within a dream
and couldn't find the route home
we climbed thru the high mountains
sharing music for their food
it was hard but there was joy
and we did love most truly

POEM 141
JUNE 9, 1999

so little time

flowers grow and reach their end
as lovers what chance have we
to grow past a certain time
night comes and grows deeply dark
as my hand does towards you reach
tonight we shall have our time
winter is a time of loss
your dark eyes i seldom see
so much in so little time

POEM 140
JUNE 4, 1999

given and lost

i love you

BRUCE HORTON

don't matter anymore
love is as the wind
i want to be with you
hours given and lost
in the gusts of pleasure
like a dream shared by two
a breeze, a storm, a gale
for i do love you

POEM 138
MAY 28, 1999

nothing evermore
pull back pull back
she has teeth
she bites and
there is nothing ever after
there is only now
there is no then

POEM 137
MAY 24, 1999

so quickly by
other things will rise and fade
your face will be with me always
i have all i share with you
in those hours we are together
hours that pass so quickly by
you will be with me and i
part of the pattern of your life

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 136
MAY 20, 1999

as the sun pulls
what does it mean to be free
to grow as the sun pulls me
to love as my heart says
i cannot answer my sweet
perhaps it's all in a dream
perhaps you need only try
can you tell me nothing else
are these doubts all your wisdom
haven't you days taught you more
i know that love is precious
that friendship is a glory
that i want to be with you

POEM 135
MAY 21, 1999

love should not be
if you cut a flower off
it lasts but a day or so
while left it can bloom for weeks
perhaps for forever
if you put a seed in glass
it grows but its leaves can no
more spread openly or free
it is not natural
if love binds you to this place
your eyes will no longer glow

BRUCE HORTON

your smile will be unhappy
love should not be so cruel

POEM 134
MAY 21, 1999

tight-clenched fingers
as if love were the wind
that tossed about a magic
site to site lasting awhile
as if love were liquid
flowing thru tight-clenched fingers
resting on an open palm
it's as if love were light
warming at times but burning
scars on the hearts of others
it's as if love had eyes
but chose its victims with rules
that don't see the lover's face
as if love were the sea
saving or destroying each
it catches in its rough waves

POEM 133
MAY 19, 1999

as night comes
i whisper in your ear
i love you and touch your hair
i hold you close as night comes
you turn to me and smile

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH
and say we should walk awhile
you are right for darkness comes

POEM 132
MAY 17, 1999

lost in my mind
and why do i sometimes cry out
from pain that i do not feel
from thoughts of acts lost in my mind
why limp when i am not hurt
which challenge am i paying for
and why is the night so mild

POEM 131
MAY 16, 1999

no yesterdays
if there is no end to time
i will once more love you
we will have all the hours we need
if there is no end to love
i have always loved you
in my arms you have always been
if there were no yesterdays
i would your lover be
together even in our dreams

BRUCE HORTON

POEM 130
MAY 10, 1999

work itself out
pull back, pull back, it's her instincts
that count, i wait in the wings
for my turn to prance on the stage
whatever role i might have
will work itself out in its hour
she is directing this play
i'll enjoy the acts i perform
i've spirit enough for that
made bold by the thought of her heart

POEM 129
MAY 7, 1999

a bit of fluff
you are, perhaps, like a spring wind
and i like a bit of fluff
borne and tossed about thru the day
for there are times that i fly
and times i fall and times you laugh
joined, we are, at these moments

POEM 128
MAY 5, 1999

POEMS FROM
JULY-DECEMBER 1999

over time

there are hours when my tears fall
and i can't explain why
what is causing me this pain
there's partings late in the day
they add up over time
why shouldn't i need to cry

POEM 151
NOVEMBER 28, 1999

cease to drum

i would taste your lips one time
my arms around your waist
while i dance that dance with you
i would that time cease to drum
and all our fears be lost
while we dance as lovers do

BRUCE HORTON

POEM 150
SEPTEMBER 28, 1999

drink full

i want to hold our love
but there's nothing there
nothing at all
you say love's forever
but give me nothing
except your smile
our love should have pleasure
willful and daring
we should drink full

POEM 149
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999

nothing, nothing

isn't death better than life
if i can't hold you in my arms
i have nothing, nothing
isn't a small desire
better than a hotel room
i am crying, trying

POEM 148
SEPTEMBER 10, 1999

in the rain

i hear your voice in the rain

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

great with power and light
do you hear me, hear mine?
i touched your face late one night
lovers under a cool moon
didn't you feel what i felt?

POEM 147
SEPTEMBER 2, 1999

can death be
my love has gone from me
her heart forever beyond
my hopes and desire
her smile that was once so warm
has grown hard and so cool
her lips darken in a frown
if i chance to meet her
can death be very different
than this when love has turned

POEM 146
AUGUST 26, 1999

PART II

POEMS: 2000-2005

Bruce Horton produced his best poems in his fifties. Among my favorite poems in this set is:

put in words

some things can't be put in words
what does "i love you" reveal
does it show how my heart hurts
how it jumps when you arrive
how it delights in your smile
these things can't be felt in words



Bruce with his parents and daughter
Hawaii 1989

POEMS FROM 2000

forever

you are beautiful
more than words can say
you twist my heart
i am in love with you
i dance when we meet
i twirl, a bit the fool
we have our time
we understand that
i wish it were forever

POEM 166
DECEMBER 21, 2000

your hand

i will walk with you
and touch your hand
(as lovers sometimes do)
we will talk of things
and tease each other
(as lovers often do)

BRUCE HORTON

you will say what you feel
and i will hear
(as lovers always do)

POEM 165
DECEMBER 21, 2000

endless streets

would you trade your whole life
for an hour of real love?
would the shine in your lover's eyes
give you heart for a century?
would the chance of meeting her
make you walk endless streets?
love is a very strange thing
but our love is not strange at all

POEM 164
DECEMBER 4, 2000

however small

is it better to dream
i've loved than not love at all
does an imagined kiss
have passion however small
was there ever a time
you loved me after all

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 163
NOVEMBER 4, 2000

the one
she smiled
and asked: are you the one?
i responded: definitely not
i'm a composite
a bunch of stones in the creek
i'm a number like 735
or 11,021
definitely odd
i ain't been prime
for about twenty years
i'd like to be singular
but i tend to multiply
go schizophrenic on weekends
she nodded and replied:
how very nice
i sure missed her number

POEM 162
SEPTEMBER 28, 2000

our joy
and yes it's love
your face is perfect and calm
as we yell out our joy
at o-matsuri
and no it's not possible
your love's yours and mine's mine

BRUCE HORTON

and we have our own joys
while they last
but it could have been
there could have been you and i
and our joy beyond compare
for hours and hours and hours

POEM 166
SEPTEMBER 18, 2000

any of it

i'm sick and tired of lovely
young women smiling at me
i can't have any of it
it clogs my veins and weakens
my heart and makes my teeth hurt
if i don't do anything
wrong and if i do something
it's all sails blowing in the wind
three steps up and off the cliff

POEM 160
AUGUST 24, 2000

dump truck

that great dump truck from the sky
when you choose to pick me up
make it late, not too early
i've got plans and i've got hopes
gimme a chance and i'll go quiet
gimme time, i won't waste it

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

dump truck dump truck in the sky
this ain't gonna end too well
how 'bout we just trash this deal

POEM 159
JULY 11, 2000

flutter in vain

i have no protection
from the heat of your smile
and it burns all the way thru
my heart's wings flutter in vain
i need you to alight
but in you i will perish

POEM 158
JULY 2, 2000

free as time

whatever hours of happiness
you can pull from time's flow
drift and dream in them
whichever course you take
you are free as time flows
time means nothing to you
whenever you're restless
you're time's daughter after all
dreams like time never end

BRUCE HORTON

POEM 157
APRIL 22, 2000

put in words

some things can't be put in words
what does "i love you" reveal
does it show how my heart hurts
how it jumps when you arrive
how it delights in your smile
these things can't be felt in words

POEM 156
APRIL 13, 2000

in my dreams

goodbye my love good night
i won't see you in my dreams
or meet you anywhere
your smile will surely flash
your eyes will surely call out
i won't be there to see
we shared time together
and walked along the river
good night my love good bye

POEM 155
MARCH 25, 2000

you eyes

because there is beauty

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

does not mean there is safety
do you wish for more hours
we could share together
we could dance as dancers do
does time not worry you
your eyes are so strong
did we share this dance before
i remember touching you

POEM 154
MARCH 19, 2000

paths cross

i get lost in your eyes
and freeze when our paths cross
i want to talk with you
and tell you my feelings
i'd like to hear your voice
and laugh as lovers do

POEM 153
FEBRUARY 28, 2000

a dancer lost

in your eyes i see you've grown
a clearer sharper image
of who you are and will be
more confident and knowing
a dancer lost in a pose
time's adding to your beauty

POEM 152
JANUARY 26, 2000

POEMS OF 2001
JANUARY - JUNE

any promise
for some moments
i am alive
soon the wind will take me
i will be gone
as will you
with all your beauty
will this end be different
is there any promise
or will we both disappear

POEM 176
JUNE 26, 2001

except for you and me
there's no rest for the wicked
and even less for you
or me
the wicked suffer badly

BRUCE HORTON

enduring the pleasures
they've stolen
so punished are the wicked
they labor thru the night
and sleep
while the good work thru the day
under the burning sun
and die
were wickedness less painful
more wicked there would be
except for you and me

POEM 175
JUNE 26, 2001

neck to nose
life is
a lot of little steps
in between the rushes
of out of control
sometimes disasters
neck to nose
sometimes disasters
neck to nice
and always we believe
in the nice
if we are healthy
if we are lucky

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 174
JUNE 26, 2001

great chances

it's strange i've not ended yet
i've had such great chances
 but failed to cash in
 i could've left in a pool
 when i was just a kid
but wasn't suicidal enough
 could've been pretty dead
but wasn't sent to the front
and that time in New Orleans
the punk got philosophical
could've fallen off the mountain
 but hit an oak tree
 after two hundred feet
could've got squished by that train
 by dump trucks or busses
 or by a Samoan or three
could've hit the telephone pole
 sliding out of control
in the car in rain and ice
 and quite a few more
 i don't know about
 so what's going on
you suppose it's all luck
maybe divine assistance
me, i figure it's a miracle

BRUCE HORTON

POEM 173
JUNE 17, 2001

drops of dew
hours wait before the dawn
wild with uncertainty
when the grass is covered
with those cold drops of dew
will we be together
will we walk in our garden
or my love will i be
alone with the roses
so bitter and sharp

POEM 172
JUNE 14, 2001

i can see
life is quick and often harsh
i will no doubt end soon
the current carries me up
and down without care
if i am calm i can see
faces in the stream
i am not alone
if i am calm i can see
colors ever shifting
towards the end
there is beauty

POEM 171

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

JUNE 8-14, 2001

off center

can you hear me? do you
know what i am thinking?
can you see what i am seeing?
do your eyes work like mine?
or is your world different
perhaps we can never touch
our eyes forever off center
our hearts in other spheres

POEM 170
JUNE 11, 2001

in between

i have hours to spare
can i dream of you
when duty calls
when walls of rock
step in between
i will still love you
forever
and our love is
out of time

POEM 169
MAY 13, 2001

made of woman

BRUCE HORTON

these winds are cruel
i see your face in each gust
would you hold out your hand
for me to hold on to
but are you safe to hold
solid, made of woman
or are you made of dream

POEM 168
APRIL 23, 2001

i am leaf
i am leaf
i am free
i sail in the wind
soaring a hundred meters
over your head
swerving back and forth
unto the ground
capturing a wild gust
i fly again
and again and again and again
i am leaf
i am free

POEM 167
APRIL 1, 2001

POEMS FROM 2001
JULY - DECEMBER

a road home

in the beginning and the end
we have nothing at all
and in between
we have dreams
and sorrows
and lies, lies, lies
perhaps
there is no real thing
perhaps
it is all make believe
i feel cold and alone
lost in the rain
without a road home

POEM 192
OCTOBER 18, 2001

so far

BRUCE HORTON

i would touch you
if i could
hold you close
but your life is so far
from the one i live
tomorrow is tomorrow
and we will live
as we must live

POEM 191
SEPTEMBER 21, 2001

dark thing come
i love you
and the plants color
and dark things come
i love you
and we walk almost
aimlessly
jump with me jump
and together we will be

POEM 190
SEPTEMBER 2001

more brittle
i've become more brittle
over time, harder
is that part of the story
do we become
more rocklike as we age

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

is this a weakness
or a strength
or is there
no choice between
for i must decide
there is no more time
between aging
and when i have to choose

POEM 189
SEPTEMBER 19, 2001

the wind blows
for me
your eyes are no more
your smile is gone
you are wind
and the wind blows away
now i am alone
in the cold of autumn

POEM 188
SEPTEMBER 6, 2001

falling badly
fair conditions are rare
conditions are usually
fermenting
pickled to be decanted
along with the snow
in early october

BRUCE HORTON

or sometime else
equally miserable
fair conditions mean little
relations happen usually
accidentally
picked by mad chance
after falling badly
in the snow
in early october
or sometime else
equally miserable

POEM 187
SEPTEMBER 3, 2001

tempests call
in the shade of mountains
the nights are darker
and storms are sudden
is love very different
it brings great joy
and black sorrow
and tempests call
they are greater than life
of immense beauty
and immense danger

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 185
AUGUST 26, 2001

by luck
there is desire
and there is death
we dance between
so much depends
on luck
do you love
me
or is it a road race
recording each mile
recorded before
repeated each time
did you ever
love me
did i
ever dance
between
when you were
with me
for that while

POEM 184
AUGUST 16, 2001

like dwarfs
there is a time
and

BRUCE HORTON

in that time
we can have
a world of wide
and what naught
or less
we can have
almost nothing
like dwarfs
trudging to work
and did you know
that i sing
would that surprise you

POEM 183
AUGUST 15, 2001

in the fire
when night comes dark
and lightning flashes
and you are cold
when day comes hot
and pushes past
your borders and
when love is met
is it our doom
to lose
i love you
can we hope
even in the fire
even in the ice

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 182
JULY 15, 2001

the rules
too short
it ends too soon
too quick for me
to learn the rules
of the game
and now it ends
before i didn't realize
each hour was precious
that the alternative
is dust
is dusty
dusty
dust

POEM 181
JULY 15, 2001

an air together
soon the wind slips free
and i am gone
soon so do you
then will we breathe
in air together
again
or do our times forever

BRUCE HORTON

miss one another
do i lose you

POEM 179
JULY 9, 2001

nothing could be
what words could i use
to reveal my love for you
words are not connected
in any way with love
words are sounds shaped by lips
shared by all the people
nothing could be more different
than words
from my love of you

POEM 178
JULY 4, 2001

ten thousand candles
what do i have
a few thousand candles to burn
life in the hot seat
pushed by power
pushed by fashion
pushed by pure luck
sometimes the luck holds good
before all hell breaks loose
after hours crouching

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

and when the luck goes bad
it can get very very bad
i could lose you
as soon i lose everything
but till then i have you

POEM 177
JULY 3, 2001

any promise
for some moments
i am alive
soon the wind will take me
i will be gone
as will you
with all your beauty
will this end be different
is there any promise
or will we both disappear

POEM 176
JUNE 26, 2001

POEMS FROM 2002

in the wind

today we walked under the sun
and the moon and today was good
and time almost disappeared
your heart is pressed tight
and times and the future
are hard as changes come
and go, like leaves in the wind
let go, let go, give it away
your heart can choose its course

POEM 210
DECEMBER 13, 2002

wish i could

wish it was just for fun
wish it was just your beauty
wish i could
wish i could
but the nights are so cold

BRUCE HORTON

and i am so alone
wish i could
wish i could
close but not close enough
did i say
i am so all almost alone
so alone
and it is night
close is all i ever dreamed
close is what i dreamed
almost close
almost real
is this the best it gets
i climb so high
and almost get
to where tomorrow surrenders
attention and care
— but it was just for fun
is wish y'all had been with me
me as we climbed
and climbed
and survived
and did better than i dreamed of
i do climb
you dream
we are but slight dream
i fear
water passes fast below
our feet
do you pass
or pause and stay with me

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 208
OCTOBER 7, 2002

t
i count the hours
given to me
unless ugly chance breaks
the flow of life
i pray i have loves
warming my days
unless stupidity stands up
saying i'll rule today
i know i make mistakes
maybe
costing me my name
i've made mistakes
i wait till you
judge my trust

POEM 206
SEPTEMBER 12, 2002

as they disappear
all those words
that are naught
all those things
that are naught
all my freedoms
as they disappear
and are naught

BRUCE HORTON

let them go and
i am free

POEM 205
SEPTEMBER 2, 2002

is not real
all of that anger
all of that envy
all of that pride
exists only in my own mind
it is not real
it is not of here and now
and i can cast it out
and make it be gone
and be clean
and be free

POEM 204
SEPTEMBER 2, 2002

old clothes
i am unbelievably free
i can put on
my old clothes and thoughts
or not
i can rub this me away
like mist off the window
or not
the lust is all in me

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

it's not the world's fire
it can and will pass on
as i will pass on
as i will pass on
with all my dreams

POEM 203
SEPTEMBER 2, 2002

merely in time
hours flow like rain past me
dripping thru my fingers
and stolen by the sand
past me hours flow like rain
slapping into my face
valleys cut into my skin
like rain past me hours flow
washing off each long day
but paid merely in time

POEM 202
AUGUST 31, 2002
POEM ALSO NAMED "LIKE RAIN"

not at all
do i have a right
to be loved
is my voice a sound
that must be heard

BRUCE HORTON

or am i a bit of wind
a leaf in autumn
pushed about
here and there
till i'm not at all

POEM 201
JULY 7, 2002

faster than the wind
i am alive
my friends and i spin
faster than the wind
we are alive
we push beyond ourselves
and sensei laughs with us
you are alive
join us if you can and
fly faster than the wind

POEM 200
MAY 22, 2002

garlic and onions
my life has a flavor
i'm garlic and onions
sorry about that
my heart has loves
you and the hills
and alongside the water
how could i wish for more

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

yet i would touch your heart
and feel the winds blow

POEM 199
APRIL 21, 2002

what greater treasure
your heart sees what my eyes see
you know without asking
what greater treasure could i have
with you the sky is bluer
the leaves are bright and greener
flowers are where there were none
will you turn, my love, to me
for hours under the sun
i would walk with you, a while

POEM 198
APRIL 6, 2002

four shades
the blossoms were almost gone
but the sky was bright blue
do you remember?
i touched your hand and pointed
to the four shades of pink
flowers above the pond
do you remember?
my princess i teased you
but got lost in your smile

BRUCE HORTON

as hours rushed past us
till i touched your hand goodbye

POEM 197
MARCH 30, 2002

under the sun

the spring wind is warm
but strong and changeable
and you?
i waited under the sun
did you know? did you care?
and you
where was your heart today
while strangers passed me by

POEM 196
MARCH 21, 2002

i return to

as i die
will the wind swoop
and carry away
me
or will i shrivel
becoming more like
the dirt
i return to
which do i fear
the most

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

which is least
horrifying

POEM 195
MARCH 4, 2002

for rugs
in the wind i blow
my heart crying for rugs
for what? for why?
in the wind i pray
for lust or love
are the two the same?
in the wind i cry
i don't know enough
to live my life, do i?

POEM 194
FEBRUARY 22, 2002

a fine joke
in my love's soft brown hair
i found a long white thread
oh joy! the gods must laugh
to see youth paired with age
to be lovely and strong
yet show that time wheels on
what a fine joke time plays
on we who breathe life's air

POEM 193

BRUCE HORTON

FEBRUARY 15, 2002

POEMS FROM 2003

our own park bench

a long lunch in the park
 our own park bench, again
 i thought i saw into your heart
 i thought you saw into mine
 both ships in troubled waters
 how do we know who we are
 how do we know what to trust
 how do we know which hope is true
 we don't ,do we? we guess
 and pray the stars give us luck
 and our hearts can face the truth
 let's talk about things again
 we can help one another

POEM 222
 OCTOBER 29, 2003

in my heart

i don't know what i know
 anymore

BRUCE HORTON

i look deep in your eyes
and what do i see
i just don't know
i look deep in my heart
and what do i see
the truth is i just
don't know
i live, i will die
the rest i don't know

POEM 218
JULY 5, 2003

a factory
it's all dreams, isn't it
my life is all pretending
pretending to be good
may be good
but it is not real
my life is a factory
of illusions
smiles hide angers
hate is covered by care
but my good lies
are unreal are fakes
my life is full of lies

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 217
JUNE 17, 2003

out of tune

so lovely! the spring's green leaves
so fresh and full of beauty
everywhere rebirth and growth
so lonely! my heart is cold
so tired and full of despair
with nothing left of my love
why am i so out of tune

POEM 216
MAY 2003

small print

if in seven years we all
change
my changing is now
what will be will be
but the present is confused
and the past is mostly lies
and the future bleak as night
ke sera serr
truth is i'm deceiving me
i've lied to me
i'm pretending to be
what i hoped to be
but wasn't
ever

BRUCE HORTON

what can my shadow become
so small and unknowing
what future do i have
reduced to small print on the page
the future's not ours to see
ke sera sera
now that i'm older
i'll be as much
or
as little as i can be

POEM 215
MAY 19, 2003

the rain
the rain talks to me
the night is cold
i am alone in darkness
the rain says to try
growth is wetness
and i may grow wiser
the rain falls on me
a time of sadness
i have love to guide me

POEM 214
APRIL 15, 2003

cold april rain
so cruel the cold april rain
tearing pettles from the cherries

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

my love left in the spring time
so harsh the bitter spring winds
giving little chance for the flowers
our hopes dead deader than death
so long the black night's darkness
of 'ring scant chance for rebirth
but you're not gone from my heart

POEM 213
APRIL 7, 2003

that used to be
in the moment's sadness
my thoughts burst like drops of rain
caught in burning fire
vanished has my heart's peace
disturbed by the cold echoes
of a love that used to be
during the springtime's birth
our death is harder to bear
mocked by a thousand shadows

POEM 212
MARCH 28, 2003

twisted and unsatisfied
the hours are so strange
twisted and unsatisfied
but they are all i have
the hours i should have had

BRUCE HORTON

twenty years more ago
i am having today
the hours i should have now
have somehow disappeared
leaving me quite alone
the hours to come to be
have they already passed?
are they what i've lived up?
in my life come and gone?

POEM 211

JANUARY 1, 2003 (FLORENCE 12-29-02)

POEMS FROM 2004

wild leaves

wild leaves cover the ground
their summer gone
their night arisen
i see your face in my mind
in the cooling weather
in the growing dark
there is warmth
in your smile
in my heart

POEM 254
NOVEMBER 24, 2004

whirlwind

i am whirlwind
i spin free
out of control you say
but not me
can't you let go
and fly with me

BRUCE HORTON

fly into the wind
what will we see

POEM 241 SAWA
JUNE 18, 2004

great things
i can imagine
more beauty than yours
but not easily
i suppose someone's smile
is warmer than yours
at least it's possible
i can dream great things
but few as breath-taking
as you

POEM 240
JUNE 16, 2004

i am joy
i am joy
the wind & i spin
free
till we fall
and then we laugh
at our silliness
i am quiet too
as i rest & grow
till the stars
grow dark

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 239 – SAE
JUNE 1, 2004

more wet
winds blow
my heart is troubled
i can not sleep
rains fall
hot, wet and more wet
i hate it
winds blow
somehow different
i am an eagle
snow comes
the cold is harsh
i have strength

POEM 238
MAY 31, 2004

twisted turns
these hours are so cold
yet some i understand
the twisted turns of fate
are unkind
i had hoped for more
but i can help others
give them what they need
i go on afraid almost
for the hours are so cold
when it is so very dark

BRUCE HORTON

i go on
though it is cold
and it is very dark

POEM 237
MAY 2004

barely touched
i live but there are
only a few moments
when i'm alive
i breathe deeply so seldom
that it hardly counts
a life barely touched
– life passes
as if in a dream –
i dream life where more real
i with more courage
to fight against the end

POEM 236
APRIL 26, 2004

as long as dreams
i am very strong
i can pretend
almost anything is true
for an hour or two
my eyesight is clear
i can see what i want to see

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

me almost touching your lips
for as long as dreams are true

POEM 235
APRIL 16, 2004

shared and said
i will be true
i will write my words
on the wind
in the storm of the times
i will write of our joys
and of our sorrows
nothing will be hid
that can be shared and said
i will keep my task
close beside me
and i will live and die
can there be anything more

POEM 234
APRIL 16, 2004

twilight
i've been between the sunlight
and the darkness of the night
twilight you might call it
but only in my dreams
as if frail dreams had more truth
than meat stocks bombs or deathrays
my real life doesn't know

BRUCE HORTON

that real is not really real
mere false dreams in my mid
on what hard rock can i sit
and not make an ass of myself
not knowing my ass from myself

POEM 233
APRIL 7, 2004

half a love

i see into your heart
and i feel this way too
yet what could we have together
weekend nights
a few hours
here and there
we could have half a love

POEM 232
APRIL 5, 2004

separate universes

i dream: we touch
your hand in mine
we move closer together
a cold wind blows
with night's coming darkness
under mysterious stars
time must have an end
but not our love
in separate universes

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 231
MARCH 29, 2004

full of life

my mind is not calm
caught in a night of attacks
i do not rule my self
has my heart been broken
is nothing left for me
until the end of time
am i more an island
than a man
little more than a pulse
i do not wish to hurt
to harm others full of life
i wish to join their rush

POEM 230
MARCH 19, 2004

gone somewhere

how can a heart beat
when it's half empty
pieces lost somewhere
in the black of the night
how can i walk upright
when i can't tell left from right
dizzier than a top spinning
mindlessly out of sight
how can i live a life
when i'm only half here

BRUCE HORTON

the rest gone somewhere
into the cold's cold bite

POEM 229
MARCH 1, 2004

knocked to the ground
spring is the cruelest season
the plum trees toss their blossoms
onto the cold earth & snow
the cool calm winter days end
and harsh winds begin to blow
everything knocked to the ground
my heart empty despite the heat
of new life and lovers
jealous of the grass that grows

POEM 228
FEBRUARY 25, 2004

does it mean
and if we touch each other
does it mean
that we are lovers?
and when we touch each other
does it mean
that it is for-ever?
and should our touching grow
does it mean
there is no other?

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 226
FEBRUARY 19, 2004

at times

i hear voices at times
in the night-time's quiet
i love you, you say
i know it's a delusion
you have little interest
and i very little life
yet when i am alone
i really hear voices
in the night's dark quiet

POEM 225
JANUARY 10, 2004

far far away

you are so beautiful
light on a cold dark night
yet so far far away
i'd like to talk with you
about things in our lives
yet how can i begin
we could walk together
it doesn't matter where
let the time pass like rain

POEM 224
FEBRUARY 4, 2004

BRUCE HORTON

a bit of lilac

can you imagine
a bit of lilac
light-purple under the sun
can you dream of hours
longer than before
i would be with you
can there be a time
we live together
there is no turning
unless i am with you

POEM 223

JANUARY 28, 2004

POEMS FROM 2005
JANUARY - JUNE

almost stops

the night is calm almost clear
with wispy moonlit clouds
crossing the sky
as i think of your touch
my heart almost stops
a feeling of joy
night time will some time pass
my love and i will smile
at the break of a new day

POEM 263 .F05
MAY 26, 2005

up then down

arrows fly up – then down
hearts move the same way
up then down
we match up very well

BRUCE HORTON

but will our flights ever match
for that long moment
or are our arrow doomed
to cross closely in the sky
but never touching

POEM 262 .F05
JUNE 6, 2005

green leaves
perhaps no flower will bloom
certainly the leaves will fall
some day
perhaps no love will grow
certainly we will age
each year
perhaps a flower will bloom
and green leaves grow
for us

POEM 261 .F05
JUNE 6, 2005

[no title]
it's almost a comedy
you and i
half a lie a part
it could be good together
if you and i
were not so far apart
and it would be good

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

if could support
the fragile thing
which is ourselves

POEM 260
2005?

Muse

probably A* and J*
are in love with me
this mean everything
and nothing
they need me for guides
and teacher and a light
they look for this
so strange is being alive
so strange is youth
so strange is age

POEM 259 .F05
2005?

NOTE: WRITING WAS HARD TO READ

[no title]

if you gave it away
you wouldn't have to carry it
anymore
if you never had it
not having it means almost
nothing
if life weren't so simple

BRUCE HORTON

we wouldn't create new problems
or would we?
so if life is so simple
where do the problem come from
anyways

POEM 257
AUGUST 30, 2005

[no title]

somewhere between desire
and a hard place
my evening finishes
so much is possible
a hundred lands unseen
yet so possible
somewhere a balance exist
and i can get there
even in the night time

POEM 256 .F05
AUGUST 30, 2005

a blue egret

a blue egret on the riverside
white snow on all the ground
melting in the sunlight
is your heart hungry too
is there an emptiness
like an unfilled pool
there is stillness

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

in the cold winter day
in these hours of waiting

POEM 255.5
JANUARY 1, 2005

perhaps not
i see the end of time
where things snap
more brittle than wood
dried by the sun
do you?
i see hours after hours
where time is used
and turned and churned
despite time's tide
don't you?
but i dread the moments
with you
when you look away
from you and yours
ignoring time's way
time & times will pall
as they always have
don't you
think we should
let time have its way?
time comes, time goes
as it always has
perhaps the beats are counted
perhaps not

BRUCE HORTON

didn't you say that that
is not what really matters?

2005?

but so strong
the mist is thick
and heavy
the future invisible
your hand is thin
but so strong
no easy answers
we are friends
or more
who knows the winds

POEM 255
MARCH 28, 2005

POEMS FROM 2005
 JULY - DECEMBER

she smiles

you assume too much
 you have some air
 to breathe
 what else do you deserve
 you presume too much
 she smiles when she sees
 you pass
 what else could you hope for
 you push too much
 we all grow over time
 into something
 why do you want more

POEM 276 .L05

HEISEI 17 12 05 - DECEMBER 5, 2005

sends shivers

your eyes are lovely

BRUCE HORTON

your smile sends shivers
thru my body
can we possible meet
is your heart open
to a friendship
or is something more
what is your bright smile
trying to say

POEM 272 .J05
HEISEI 17 10 21

he made me
he made me
he was with me at birth
i grew years passed
he was always there
i could hear his hear beat
despite life's noise
at the very end & unwatched
he seemed angry at his weakness
we talked long
i promised i would carry on
i now carry a piece of him
in my heart
he did not truly die
he passed beyond
he lives in my heart

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 375 .J05

HEISEI 17 10 25

EDITOR'S NOTE: OUR FATHER DIED OCTOBER 25, 2015

in beauty
go in beauty
for what else is there
that is worthwhile
the gaudy
the selfish
the liars
are all the same
go in beauty
pain is part of life
pain is part of life for us all
pain can help us grow
pain can be a seed
go in beauty

POEM 275 .J05

HEISEI 17 10 21 – NOVEMBER 28, 2005

summer's heat
winds blow
sometimes breaking trees
sometimes cooling summer's heat
you have great ability
do storms really matter
when your heart is true
you will not fail

BRUCE HORTON

your children will grow
they will be strong
he who loves you
will feel joy
for you give
far more
than you receive

POEM 274 .K05

HEISEI 17 11 9 – NOVEMBER 9, 2005

FOR YOKO OCHIAI

a solution
time has no pain
it has only death
a solution
to a problem
death has no voice
it only laughs
at those
who hope

POEM 271 .I05

HEISEI 17 9 17 – SEPTEMBER 17, 2005

talk or shop
i would like to touch you
we could hold hands
or get hot and sweaty
i would like to be with you

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

we could talk or shop
or get hot and sweaty
i would like to learn from you
we could teach each other
or get hot and sweaty

POEM 270 .105
SEPTEMBER 17, 2005

gods have decided
maybe i'm supposed to be alone
maybe the gods have decided
it would be better
if i lived by myself
if i were happy with what
the gods seem to have decided
would be best for me
mountains could fly
my dreams tell me helping
others is what i should seek
which is just fine with me
but i'd like to be with you

POEM 269 .105
HEISEI 17 9 9 – SEPTEMBER 9, 2005

so sleek
i like you just as
you are but
if you were a bird

BRUCE HORTON

you'd be a fishing hawk
so fierce and fast
if you were a bug
you'd be a monarch butterfly
so strong and enduring
if you were a cat
you'd be a spotted leopard
so sleek and clever

POEM 268 .105

HEISEI 17 4 9 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2005

mere joy

can i be content
with mere joy
do i need yet more
i have your smile
your open heart
we dance together
the river god has
blessed my life
how can i give thanks

POEM 267 .H05

HEISEI 17 9 8 -AUGUST 28, 2005

on nothing

i suppose i'm insane
the voices i hear in my mind
agree
on nothing

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

except about my inability to deal
with reality
a truly painful blow (to me)
but i do have strong points
i think
my mind sometimes works
tho it occasionally stops
i can deal with uncertainty
for a few minutes
i can explore new courses
until it gets dark
i relish new flavors
unless they're strange
so for a very poor life
i'm doing quite exceptionally
good, except for the bad
and i haven't even
killed anyone or even tried
very hard

POEM 266 .H05

HEISEI 17 8 26 – AUGUST 26, 2005

tadpoles could not swim
if butterflies had no wings
if tadpoles could not swim
if leaves didn't turn to the sun
if i couldn't see your beauty
i would still day dream of you
i would still want to be with you
i wish this evening weren't so cold

BRUCE HORTON

that my years could disappear
that i could be with you

POEM 265 .H05

HEISEI 17 8 26 – AUGUST 26, 2005

so little knowing
we fight as dancers do
so quickly twisting
hit and run
we laugh as friends do
so often smiling
run and fall
we change as all must do
so little knowing
what will come

POEM 264.5 .H05

HEISEI 17 8 26 – AUGUST 14, 2005

[no title]
like a candle in the wind
your smile is precious light
but so early ended
when storms blow
like the glory of a sunrise
you break open new worlds
but i have so little
how can i pay
life is like a strange dream
your smile is an anchor

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

but life is so harsh
what can i hope for

POEM 264
AUGUST 26, 2005

INCOMPLETE POEMS

The following poems are from scattered handwritten notes. They are not part of Bruce's numbering scheme, and often have no dates or title. They appear to be written between 2003 and 2005.

a bit twisted

my love sees herself in my eyes
 a bit twisted to be sure
 for my eyes see only beauty
 my mind echoes my loves' words
 tinting them with strange bright colors
 for my lip are saying prayers
 does my love's heart mirror mine
 do I dance there and give pleasure
 what've I become in her smile

2003?

[no title]

i am spring

BRUCE HORTON

i grow
i feel joy
i am thunder
i am earth
i laugh
and i care
for people
i am kind

2003?

[no title]
there will be anger
i will live in the sunset
and turn gently over
will you have this choice
will you suffer
will you have a future
fame is nothing but lies
i rest below that
not here
i dream another life may happen
i dream that time's not bound
bound that dies

2003?

[no title]
lighter than a bit of flame
shredded by the night time

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

dark is dark
and nights are intense
as your demons
[undecipherable]

2004?

[no title]
might passes to the children
knowing as little as they can
queue freed *[undecipherable]*
death cuts the lock
sight is so limited
my eyes always blind
before i can live
i must accept death
all else is lies

4/13/04

[no title]
life is like a river
it has but on end
but the courses are infinite/ a host
my river has been varied
rapid and slow in turn
thru beauty and pain
may your river be full
rich in experience
before you rejoin the great sea

BRUCE HORTON

it's probably true
love is an explosion
waiting to ignite
reacting to me
love calms waters
divided by storm
and i know it's time
this is the beginning
and love is the end

SUI 24 11 00

[no title]
i will be true
winds blow
minds change
i will be true
my children will grow
my life will [?]
I will be true

2004?

[no title]
islands in the sky
floating closer
as my life departs
no averages anymore
it's all grows
into dark

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

time speeding, life's fleeting
there is so much left
we will not see

5/2/04

[no title]
how many lies
have you told today
do you count
do they just slide by
how much shit
have you pitched to others
do you count your [?]
do you claim they're [?]
how many years
have you lived in [?]
do you count your sins
do you know your danger

5/12/04

Yoriko
i am joy
i dance with the wind
i am happiness
I am quiet
[?] is slow
And deep light
i am laughter

BRUCE HORTON

lighter near light
brighter than the sun
i am so beautiful
i laugh at near [?]
enjoying my life
i am pleasure
to be with
for i laugh
& dance & sing

7/15/04

[no title]
beauty arises in the east
when the wind is calm
there is beauty in the east
beauty grows across the north
when cold shatters everything
making joy the only hope
beauty rises in the west
[undecipherable]

2004?

[no title]
light will fall again
my heart will sing
before i die and
it's number counted out
night will spread wide

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

cool and calm and dark
and when i die
i wish it to be quick

[no title]

i be one like a pillar
i support
help others grow
i am like a pillar
i give support
to those who need it
but most, i tell them
[undecipherable]

NOVEMBER 4, 2005

[no title]

my job is to help others
become what they wish to be
oh smelly shit
what kind of life is this?
My life is like a pot
which smells very bad
i will help
others
as i can
attitude
what else have i,
i'll help
i'll do what i can

BRUCE HORTON

NOVEMBER 15, 2005

PART III

POEMS: 2006-2010

These poems were the last Bruce wrote. He died on
February 26, 2012.



Bruce and Reina at a wedding in 2007

POEMS FROM 2006

likely not

there are as many hours
of darkness as there are
of light
does this mean i will again
be with you after this long
long night
likely not
for
a few minutes with you
count as full weeks
of bright life

POEM 282 .F06
JUNE 12, 2006

be no more

time passes, a ticking clock
tomorrow will come
and then be no more
love happens, and disappears

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

into memories often false
that may lead to no where
you smile, truly, only sometimes
lucky is the one to whom
you promise your heart

POEM 281 .F06
JUNE 7, 2006
OF LILLIAN-SENSEI

perhaps

heaven is a place i'm told
far away from here
a place of the non-living
perhaps
heaven is the time i spend
shouting and sweating with you
a time of fighting and dancing
heaven is a feeling i think
of the end of one journey
and of the start of one new

POEM 280 .E06
MAY 13, 2006

gods are laughing

the gods sometimes give gifts
when i dance with you
the gods are smiling
the gods surely enjoy a joke

BRUCE HORTON

when we twist and fall
the gods are laughing
the gods of course judge our lives
when we play our best
the gods are approving

POEM 279 .E06
MAY 13, 2006

ever changing
our dance is like fire
hot of course
and wet from sweat
our dance is like wind
twisting turning
and ever changing
our dance is like nothing
i've done before
and it is good

POEM 278 .D06
APRIL 1, 2006

in between
the clock counts hours
our heart counts something
else
something in between
the ticks
sideways from normal
our heart can see into shadows

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

it can see thru layers of lies
after all
we choose
which time we will keep

POEM 277 .C06
MARCH 14, 2006

we dance
you are a joy
time with you disappears
what will be will be
we dance for a while
strong and eager
what else will be will be
i know so little
of what will be
it must be as it must be

POEM 276 .B06
FEBRUARY 18, 2006

POEMS FROM 2007

fishhooks

how did she get those
 fishhooks into my heart
 i didn't see any bait
 drifting thru the water
 maybe it's something she dropped
 like her laugh or a smile
 i guess they could have gotten
 in when i looked in her eyes
 hell! maybe they're like landmines
 lying around for poor someone
 to explode by dumb luck

POEM 285 .107
 DECEMBER 19, 2007

[no title]

and then my love
 what happens as
 my strength fails
 your youth grows

BRUCE HORTON

and we are torn apart?
as you desire birth
and i quiet rest
what happens my love
when spring kisses
winter?

OCTOBER 31, 2007

gods' gifts

your heart is a gift from the gods
to me —open and responsive—
my good fortune to know your smile
but how can i thank the gods?
what coin could match such a gift?
—so fair and unexpected—
and there's a tale about gods' gifts
it says the joy is always paid
for with deep sorrow of the soul
will that indeed be my fate?

POEM 284 .F07
JULY 23, 2007

butterflies say

butterflies say
no time to delay
so off we go
dreaming of tomorrow

POEM 283 .F06
JUNE 28, 2007

POEMS FROM 2008

[no title]

we spend today together
we run for hours
your legs are tired
the mountain are high & golden
today the trails are different
i love you
is there a trail we can run together
a remote trail
where runners seldom go

AUGUST 8, 2008

almost impossible

we run free
light, swift as the wind
mountains laugh with us
the shoreline was lovely
fall colors, almost impossible
as we ran and ran

BRUCE HORTON

i love running with you

POEM 290 .j08
OCTOBER 23, 2008

perfect blue

your eyes shine
as we climb and climb
people laugh and smile
the mountain was so high
the sky so clear
the lake so perfect blue
later clouds cover peaks
we return and your eyes
close in sleep
i think you are beautiful

POEM 289 .j08
OCTOBER 28, 2008

[no title]

I can't touch her,
she's in an incubator
shit! life is cold!
she's a postcard
we write and then send
it's gone! love is real
growth is more real
her love opens me
and time may arrive

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

2008?

gods' gift
the gods' gifts are cruel
your hands touch is divine
but is there no more
your smile is so enchanted
but is there no kiss
i would wish to wake
and to see you smile
in this i dream

POEM 286 .08
JULY 19, 2008

eyes close
your eyes close
as we sprint together
time is gone
your heart jumps
as we climb together
harder than ever
your arms are warm
as we celebrate
time has gone

POEM 286 .F08
2008?

POEMS FROM 2009

so jump
 we live so
 we must jump into
 the dark of coming night
 life is a dice-throw
 death cries out
 loud in certain waiting
 for our number
 life is
 and then it is not
 so jump as far
 as you can

POEM 308 .J09
 OCTOBER 13, 2009

not equal
 hours on the road
 hours of life
 not paid time
 changes happen

BRUCE HORTON

the road ever changes
as miles go by
some is dangerous
some parts pure fun
especially the speed
the road is good
and proves that
all hours are not equal

POEM 306.09
SEPTEMBER 22, 2009

glass doors
winds slash the windows
rain blows in
i close the glass doors
your heart is not calm
winds blow inside and out
harsh rains fall
sunshine is merely pleasant
we need those storms
or we never grow
last verse illegible, not included

2009?

lies?
your eye blinks
time
now
there is no here

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

then
no there
we live, we die
this is time
this only is time
this is only time
in the blink of an eye
time dies
there is no now
no then
we live, we die
this is time
this and this only
is time

2009?

together
there may have been a time
when we were born
together
we lived our lives
together
there is never ever
going to be
in this whirl of life
such a time
the next life will be
as it will be
if only time could twist
a little

BRUCE HORTON

we would feel love
we would feel sorrow
both are natural
when love and life end
there is grief
i see only sorrow

POEM 305.5 .09
SEPTEMBER 7, 2009

in sorrow
earth is forever
our wings are weak
we can see so little
of life of love
all ends in sorrow
as sunlight burns us down
how can i think
we can fly
together

POEM 305 .H09
AUGUST 28, 2009

a gift
love is a gift
life is a gift
life is a curse
love is a curse
both end in death
both in sorrow

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

why would we want
to live and love
when love and life
end only in sorrow

POEM 304 .H09
AUGUST 28, 2009

wheels free
gods give gifts
they give clear sunlight
on a storm-full afternoon
we wheel free
past beach and river
untouched by time
gods give & take away
sorrows and joys
we were blessed
for an afternoon
do the gods
ask us to pay

POEM 303 .H09
AUGUST 26, 2009

slow speed
it's about passion,
isn't it?
life at slow
speed sucks, right?
you have your loves

BRUCE HORTON

but your soul
burns
you want to fly,
don't you?

POEM 301.H09
AUGUST 3, 2009

the night
i would take your arm
and walk together
into the night
we might pause here
or there to touch
upon our secrets
you would laugh i know
you often do
do winds ever lie?

POEM 300.G09
JULY 25, 2009

[no title]
would you share an hour
with me
while hours pass
your heart is open
your love is small
i feel cold in the [evening]
of your [undecipherable writing]

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

we may never dance together
the tune is not quite right

JULY 25, 2009

turn back

i wish that time could slow
and turn back its years
for a few hours
i would ask you and you
would say “yes” and
we would dance
for hours, perhaps slowly
two worlds so far apart
together for awhile

POEM 298 .G09

JULY 25, 2009

very dark

you watch, don't you?
and see the stupidities
the pretty, petty dances
of the children
what do you think
of them all
of their parents
your eyesight is very dark
isn't it?
of what do you approve?
what is good enough?

BRUCE HORTON

must the angels dance?
must the wise ones cry?
in all this, we agree

POEM 297 .G09
JULY 14, 2009

you

you watch as eagles do
for prey such
as a stupid thought
you sing as songbirds do
of dreams and of lives
you may not live
you play as monkeys do
life is joy, with strength
you will bloom

POEM 295 .F09
JULY 14, 2009

song of madness

may the gods forgive me
for my foolish pride
and untimely dreams
yet i begin to hear again
the music of that old old dance
and song of madness
so soft does the beat begin
like echoes in the darkness
of a heart too willing

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 294 .F09
JUNE 24, 2009

[no title]
my key to heaven's door
is fake
how could it be else?
all roads to gods are lies
written in great letters
prophets tell us harsh lies
what else could be heard?
saints walk on a film of lies
and so must you and i

MARCH 23, 2009

[no title]
this cruel love of time
each hour more separated
more surely apart
this cruel love of mine
so strong and directed
to a hopeless hope
this cruel love of mine
against my heart
against my hope
love is such an unkind gift
more bitter than any grief
or sorrow felt in the heart
crueler than the coldest night

BRUCE HORTON
light awake memory
a hunger without food

JANUARY 30, 2009

POEMS FROM 2010

my heart worth

a thief has stole my face
and worn it on the streets
playing the fool
bragging of the dark places
i hide inside me
to all others ears
proving my heart worth
some base metal
a handful of colored beads

POEM 329 .J10
OCTOBER 21, 2010

half lived

life is very simple
you grow or you die
like a vegetable
obviously
death has its thunderbolts
which must strike somewhere

BRUCE HORTON

but most of the time
most of our lives are counted
breathe by breathe
our lives are lived
or half lived
and most must ask
why was I so weak
why didn't I try
you see?
so little courage have we
we give life so little honor
blinded, perhaps, by lust
life asks for a bit more
for a dance, perhaps
or maybe for a quiet song
or for a simple thanks
life is no question
nor has life an answer

POEM 326 .E10
MAY 19, 2010

a ghost girl

i had thought we were together
all those hours and months
it turns out I was wrong
i was alone all that time
living with empty fantasies
a ghost girl took my heart

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

POEM 328 .E10
MAY 17, 2010

only hope
love is a safe harbor
some believe
safe from cruel tides
love is a harsh tempest
i believe
waves overcoming all
in love nothing is real
all lies are true
all truth is false
in love
there is only hope

POEM 327 .E10
MAY 4, 2010

to here
i've been in love before
but never to here
a healing sort of place
we've walked ten thousand roads
but never on one like this
perhaps a gift of a god?
you've given me your heart
and you already had mine
a song of great faith

POEM 325 .E10

BRUCE HORTON

MAY 3, 2010

to live

death has the rare license
to divide
the inseparable
death plays its little jokes
on we who only live
until we become dust
i believe death laughs
at we of little courage
to live our lives

POEM 326 .E10

MAY 3, 2010

my love

my love, let us dance
that long soft dance
through the night and day
my love, let us touch
that warm soft touch
until time itself has gone away
my love, let us kiss
that kiss of great trust
be times and ages as they may

POEM 324 .E10

MAY 3, 2010

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

a quiet song
love is laughter
a shared joke
about the silliness of life
love dances lightly
a quiet song
about the joy of life
love is about us
our beats of heart
about the beauty of our lives

POEM 332 .E10

APRIL 19, 2010

WRITTEN NEXT TO THIS POEM, "GENIUS!" IS CIRCLED

a
a god once stopped by
and said to me
'you don't own your life
it's a gift, you see, for
a few billion heart-beats
at best, then time will pass
as will fear
the god laughed and said
you 'kids get out of here
go getta life
go getta life
this ain't no jazz
go getta a good life
no pain there ain't no gain
no pain, there ain't no gain

BRUCE HORTON

POEM 312 .D10
APRIL 15, 2010

whose soldier
whose soldier are you
in this murderous
march of time
whose commands do you heed
as hours savagely tear
thru your friends and lovers
what answer will you give
when the judge asks which day
you'll pay for your choices

POEM 310 .D10
APRIL 4, 2010

steps to come
shall we dance
that slow dance
the one that lasts for years
will your face
turn toward mine
and smile for the steps to come
won't you share
those to-swift hours
as we spin and turn and whirl

POEM 309 .C10
MARCH 5, 2010

IN MEMORIAL: BRUCE WAYNE HORTON, 1949-2012

By Valerie Horton, 2/5/2018

As I write my brother's memorial, I have gained respect for those who attempt to memorialize a life. It is not that my brother is hard to write about. He was a hot mess of virtues and vices like most of us. What is difficult, is trying to capture why someone who didn't know him should care. What is the value of one life among the seven billion who live on this planet? His poems tell the story of the inner life of one thoughtful man milling among so many. Is that enough?

My view into Bruce's life was as an observer, and as I read these poems I have learned that I understood only a sliver of a man whose life was intensely internal. I will draw conclusions from his life that match the themes and narrative of these poems. In reading this body of work, my main impression is that his internal focus of attention is tied to his desire to be an expatriate. There is a connection between his internal landscape and his conflicted relationship with United States of America.

Bruce was many things, obviously a poet, and also a linguist and published scholar, an adored teacher, a loving father, a husband, a son, a brother, a friend, and more. He was also an expatriate at heart, which makes him rare. Many Americans travel, but few long to make their home in another place and culture. From his letters home, it was clear that Bruce was always ambivalent about his home country, with both a draw towards America and away from it. He grew up during the Vietnam War and civil rights eras. The injustice he witnessed bothered him deeply. I believe he found injustice in Japan as well, but in neither country, did he feel much need to try to change the culture. His focus was on his inner journey and with the people whose path he crossed.

The Minnesota Early Years

Born December 9, 1949, in Homecroft, a suburb of Duluth, Minnesota, Bruce spent his early years as a small-town boy. Family movies from that era show Bruce and my brother Gary, sledding, fishing, and running carefree, a.k.a., an Andy Griffith Show episode. My father, Milton Horton, worked for the Uniroyal Tire Company, while my mother, Claire, stayed home to raise her sons. One of my favorite stories from that time was Bruce was given a BB gun for Christmas, during rough play, he accidentally shot Gary. Gary was not seriously hurt. My father in his rage broke the BB gun in half over his knee. Bruce didn't care much for guns after that. My father and Gary enjoyed deer hunting over the years, Bruce either didn't go or went reluctantly.

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH



Milt and Claire's Wedding, 1949

Gary was born in November 1950 and the two boys grew up, close and not close, at the same time. While they were playmates, their personalities and interests were different. Bruce was the good student, quieter, more introspective. Gary was charming, joyous, and filled with interest in the outdoors, sports, and girls. Bruce was intense, a bit brooding, and very kind to a younger sister, born nine years later. I suspect Bruce's mix of intensity, intellect, and aloofness would have attracted girls in his youth. I know it made him popular later in his life as a graduate student and faculty member. That said, he had friends but preferred the introverts path of fewer and deeper friendships and relationships.

BRUCE HORTON



Chubby Baby Bruce, 1950

My father's job moved the family to Minneapolis in 1961 eventually settling in Fridley, a northern suburb. Bruce played outside, read, and learned the guitar. Summer weekends were spent at the cabin up North, a quintessential Minnesota experience. Bruce had odd jobs, was on the tennis team, and was a good student at Spring Lake Park High School. He had a small Honda motorcycle, and some of my best childhood memories were riding on the back through the suburbs of Minneapolis.



Gary, Valerie, and Bruce, 1961

The Wandering Years

Bruce enrolled at the University of Minnesota in 1967 and dropped out in 1969. My brother claimed he traveled 40,000 km across America after leaving school. I believe he worked for a while as roustabout at David Brinkley's ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. After that, he backpacked around the world, avoiding the draft. He often traveled with Mary L. Crabtree. He took on the name Indigo Jones during his travels, and Mary choose Sunshine. A silly affectation in hindsight, though as a ten-year old, I found it romantic. From his letters home, he mostly worked as dishwasher, played his guitar for loose change, and considered a career as a poet or playwright. He sank wholeheartedly into the late 1960's hippy lifestyle with long hair and too much drinking and drug use. In letters to my father, he argued against both capitalism and communism. He hated the war and thought Nixon a thug. He couldn't reconcile a country he loved with a country involved in Vietnam.

BRUCE HORTON



High School Graduation, 1967

He married Mary Crabtree on June 5, 1971 on the beach in Monterey, California. His letters talk of their traveling around Europe in a Volkswagen bus. That image is such a 60's counterculture stereotype that it borders on the ludicrous, however true. I believe he loved Mary deeply and when she left him a year or so later, it was a psychological blow that he dealt with poorly for a long time. As he aged, Bruce would never speak of two topics from his past: his first marriage or his time in the military. It was as if by never mentioning those two times in his life, he could make them cease to be real.

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH



Bruce and Mary's Wedding, 1971

Despite his travels, he could not escape the Vietnam War. I remember my father's frantic efforts to reach Bruce in some European port before the military moved against him for draft evasion. In his letters home, Bruce acknowledged he could lose the ability to ever return to America. So even in his early 20's, some part of him wanted to leave America. I don't know what changed his mind, but he did return and entered the Army in July 1971. He asked to be anything other than a rifleman, wishing for a medical or a supporting role. After basic training, the army trained him as a sharp shooter. Somehow, he ended up serving an adjunct role for the military brass in Fort Ord, California. He went on a hunger strike, drinking one cup of V8 and eating one celery stalk a week. Bruce was around 6'1" and his weight dropped down to 125. He received an honorable medical discharge after seven months in the military for an unnamed preexisting condition, likely aggravated by his hunger strike. To my mother's horror, he looked like a skeleton when he came home.

BRUCE HORTON



Army, 1971

Bruce returned to the University of Minnesota in 1973 and earned a B.A. degree in English Literature. I believe he stopped using drugs at this time or perhaps during his time in the army. He continued to drink heavily throughout his lifetime. After graduating, he settled down for a while in New Orleans where he found a job as an aide in an inner-city library branch. His letters home during that time show a deep love for working with the children and a deep loathing of bureaucracy. From these letters, I believe he did some growing up and healing from the extremes of his early lifestyle.

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH



University of Minnesota Graduation, 1974

His letters are more centered and more outwardly focused towards the world. He had a motorcycle and drove it around the bayou country. His letters often touch on the beauty of the region. One of his poems states that he almost died during an assault in New Orleans (poem 173, *Great Chances*). He developed a relationship with a first-rate librarian, Patricia Montgomery. When he moved to Utah in 1976 to go to graduate school at the University of Utah, Pat came with him. My father's job had transferred our family to Salt Lake City at this time.

The Utah and Hawaii Years

Bruce and I attended the University of Utah at the same time. In 1980, I earned my bachelor degree, he earned master's degrees in both linguistic and early English literature. He loved the Utah deserts and spent many hour hiking and traveling around southern desert.

BRUCE HORTON



Bruce and Pat, Arches National Park, 1979

His relationship with Pat ended and he worked for a few months in Japan teaching English. He was fascinated by the Japanese language and intrigued by the culture. He moved to Hawaii in 1980 where he worked on his PhD in linguistics from the University of Hawaii while teaching at the Hawaii Pacific University. I joined him in Hawaii for two years while I earned my library degree. He loved teaching, and evidence suggests he was popular with his students. His apartment was small, and every wall was covered with bookcases. He read voraciously and worked on poetry during this period, none of it survives. In one letter to me, he mourns not having kept his earlier writings.



University of Utah Graduation, 1980

In Hawaii, Bruce was more settled and stable then I had ever

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

seen him before, largely, because he was in strong, healthy relationship with a former student, Emiko Hirose. They married in 1986. In 1989, they had a daughter Reina Asami. Reina's birth marked the happiest time in my brother's life. There are hundreds of pictures of him doting on his daughter. He loved fatherhood and being part of a happy family. Sometime during this period, he began seriously exercising, running for miles. He often spoke of having an endorphin addiction.



Bruce and Emiko Wedding, Hawaii, 1986

The Japanese Years

After twelve years, Bruce finished his PhD in 1992. In 1993, he and his family moved to Japan. Bruce started teaching at Kanda University of International Studies working up to a full professor, and after his death he was named professor emeritus. He lived in old Tokyo and loved attending the local festivals and perfecting his Japanese

BRUCE HORTON



3-5-7 Celebration, Japan, 1993

He continued to love running and biking, constantly running marathons. He sometimes joined the overnight long-distance races with a torchlight on his head, running 100 miles at a time. Many of his later poems touch on his love of running. He would tell me about running up Mount Fuji, down it, back up and back down in a 24-hour period. My super-fit brother did these ultrathons in his fifties and sixties. A lot of his poems, deal with his love of the Japanese countryside. All through his life, the one constant in Bruce's life were a love of open spaces and the beauty of the natural world. He told me once that the average Japanese city dweller loved art based on nature but disliked being outdoors.



Bruce at a Local Festival

Around this time, he and Emiko separated, although they remained close, jointly raising Reina. Emiko was steadfastly by his side as he was dying. Reina and Bruce traveled extensively, often visiting family in New Mexico, Colorado, and Minnesota. He routinely came home with Reina to see our family. One of the most powerful poems in this collection was written the day our father died (see poem #375, *He Made Me*.) Reina and Bruce traveled to Mongolia, China, Italy, Australia and many other countries.



Reina's Coming of Age Celebration, 2010

In August 2011, I called Bruce in Japan, who had an apartment by himself at the time, after receiving an incoherent email from him. He was unable to speak clearly (dysprosody), and was reluctant to go to a doctor. In the end he did and was diagnosed with an aggressive Glioblastoma and underwent brain surgery within a week. He wrote a terms-of-life letter that illustrated his condition: *"I am expecting that I will hold on a brain operation that is serious... I am of course for all my hope and love to my daughter, my wife, my sister, my mother and to my relatives, and all workers and all students which I have been in so extremely good luck. I have been with so happy so I have could ever in choice."*

The surgery went reasonably well, and after being released from the hospital, he returned to his apartment. Within a few days, he had a major brain aneurysm causing severe brain

THE INNER JOURNEY NORTH

damage. He was hospitalized and never regained the ability to communicate. He died with Emiko and Reina by his side on February 26, 2012. His students and fellow faculty at Kanda University held a beautiful memorial for him. He was cremated and buried in his wife's family tomb in Japan.

In one of Bruce's unfinished poems he wrote:

my river has been varied
rapid and slow in turn
thru beauty and pain
may your river be full
rich in experience
before you rejoin the great sea

It is a lovely wish to offer the unidentified other he speaks to so often in these poems. It also makes me wonder whether Bruce's restless soul completed its inner journey to rejoin the great sea or whether some part of him keeps wandering, ever glancing backwards towards his lodestone, the northern star.

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