

Poetry Series

Joseph Martin III
- poems -

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Joseph Martin III(8/19/1968)

Welcome to my world.

This collection of poems, if it were to have a title, would be ' A Short Candle in the Long Darkness.'

If you are wanting to know more about me, then get use to disappointment.....

Dedication:

All that I write is always dedicated to all of those I have found that have struggled to find their answers, as well for any in this world who somehow keep going, even when they don't even know why. I carry all of you in my heart:

My family
Randy & Jen
Nadine
Annie
Brian
Jo (Maiden)
Paula
Peggy
Jeremiah
Robert
Alisha & Craig
Stephanie
Stacy C.
Stacy M.
Camille
Sarah

To those musicians whose songs and music have sustained me and given me strength, or has taken me away for just a moment even in the greatest despair:

Collective Soul 'Shine'
Live 'Lightning Crashes'
Peter Gabriel
Shelia Chandra

Tori Amos
Henry Rollins
Eva Cassidy
Diana Krall
Holly Cole
Toni Price
Nanci Griffith
Yoav
A Fine Frenzy
and all the others...

To Henry and to all those I have known who eventually lost the strength to keep up the fight; and to the lost I have not met still out there searching in the darkness.:

Do not ever think you failed or were cowards: you had a strength and courage to keep going as long as you did. I light the candle to keep your memories alive, and to light the way of those still wandering. You were and still are loved.

-Joseph Martin III
6/2/2008

Advice To A Friend

Well, if you must...

Five chambers full

but leave an empty sixth

and give yourself a sporting chance.

Joseph Martin III

Billy Boy

Billy Boy was as round as a Buddha,
his small bald happy head sitting atop his shoulders
like God had become distracted during final assembly
and somewhere in the world there was another man
skinny as a rail and head like a balloon.

An eternal class clown going on thirty
everything could become something funny,
even if it only amused himself.

In the Las Vegas summer he would sweat,
sitting in the small un-air conditioned hall,
dark stains on his shirt with a life all their own,
trying to stay sober for god-only-knows which time.

Billy Boy liked to drink a bit,
smoke himself a bit of rock,
and party with the working girls on Fremont Street.

He would come and go

and when he was gone for a few days
you knew he was off and running
but eventually would come back through the door,
beat-down but still grinning that bufoonish boyish grin.

You would have to try very hard
not to have at least some small part of you
that liked, faults and all, silly, stupid Billy Boy.

But someone must have done more than tried.

One day in a filthy shithole of a room
in a sad hotel down by the working girls on Fremont Street,
some bastard decorated the walls with poor Billy Boy's brain.

Joseph Martin III

Cathedral Rock

I didn't want to be here.
I wanted to be over there-
bounding up the big mountain
light of foot with an effortless display
that proves I am not old.

But someone moved the trail sign.

So here I am,
aching legs and wheezing chest,
having smoked half a pack
on the way up.

I am greeted atop this rock by one small priest,
then two, then three, with four paws each
and frocks of short brown fur.
They look through curious expectant eyes
as I sit down and offer them a trail mix tithe.

The canyon below spreads out like dreams of my youth,
without horizon or end, no knowledge of the darkening sky,
or the swift stern storms that sweep through in summer.
Far below there are people, talking,
talking of war,
of love,
of death,
of a thousand important things
that we feel have to be said.

Here on Cathedral Rock,
the eager priests eat, scurry, and leap about,
the sun is warm,
and a cool breeze blows.

8/19/2004 rev 8/26/2005

Joseph Martin III

Combat Fatigue

Twenty-four years I have held a grim soldier's watch,
a weary veteran of so many bloody campaigns,
drafted not enlisted in this war.

I might have even been a general by now
if only I could find anyone left to lead.

Whenever the wounds become too much,
when this world becomes too much,
they send me away from the front,
where the doctors with too serious a stare
and nurses not even worth a second look
staple and sew me back together again,
almost but never quite like new,
even when I take my pills.

With a pat on the ass,
plastic smile to reassure,
and no medals upon my chest,
they send me on my way.
I trudge my honored happy way
to once again retake my place at the front,
just as I have year after glorious year.

But the years have taken their toll.

I no longer think of home,
a place that never was and never will be,
where a pale sweet girl might wait for me,
with her soft lips kiss away all fears,
every memory of this Hell-scorched place.

This is the only home I know,
colorless land
of the black night and black dawn,
all life between seen in sad shades of grey.

I will not wear a helmet anymore.

I'll walk with my head above the parapet,
hoping, no praying for that lonely sniper
to take one last photograph of me
through his cross-haired camera lens.

6-8-2008

Joseph Martin III

Communion

I am your priest
kneeling before
the altar of your temple,
the sanctuary of our bed,
paying adoration
with a kiss.

my blessing
my curse
my resolution
my absolution

Taste of sweat upon skin
hard press of flesh
upon flesh, melting
melting and becoming
falling and transforming
something not me not you
but more than us both,
inseparable, within
and without.

Motion and rhythm
caught in the burning blue flame
turn and gyration
heartbeat and heartbeat
pulling closer
pushing deeper
into empty spaces
towards our epiphany
with a shudder...

Somewhere in dawn's first light
the faithful kneel towards Mecca
and pious men pray before the
Wailing Wall.

Our private offering
is no less reverent,

penetrating the divinity
within one another's eyes.

9/2003, rev 10/2004

Joseph Martin III

Crossings

Piercing through darkness
with the icy Atlantic waters
35,000 feet below,
coach-crammed but excited,
I watched the screen overhead
and the small colored dot,
plotting the course
from there to there.

Eleven years of places and faces
have since passed and are still passing,
crossings and more crossings,
but now I no longer watch colored dots.

9/5/2005

Joseph Martin III

Dawn Is Coming

Sing a little louder

dance a little closer.

The band is packing up

for the dawn is coming.

Put your panties back on

kiss me one more time.

Cast one more silent glance

for the dawn is coming.

Pour me one more drink

let us toast this last dying day.

Load the chambers full my friend

for the dawn is coming.

10/2/2006

Joseph Martin III

Descent

Empy bed

empty rooms

hollow chambers

long shadows cast

by a knowing moon

in this barbarous night.

Where stirred whispers

soft as love's first glance,

now only echoes

of slamming doors

and rustling thoughts

like wind through dead leaves

of what will never be.

One more picture to hang

one more face to remember

in a gallery of lost desire

there is room for no more.

I am so sorry boys and girls

I can't come out to play.

The devil is sitting inside my head

wanting me to play with more lethal toys.

Time to rest.

Let my final escape

be a party with bright lights

and a siren's scream.

10/8/2006

Joseph Martin III

Dusty Diamond Among The Shards (For Stacy)

Beautiful girl

with the easy smile

and ready laugh,

whose heart broke and was broken

so many times

even she thought there was nothing left to break.

Perhaps small comfort

but so rare is your gift,

like a nightengale in a gas chamber,

an impossibility in the intolerable,

a small but not in vain hope

that even the shattered soul

may one day dance upon a greener shore.

6/1/2008

Joseph Martin III

Edge

Surging waterfall cascade,
all at once the old dam won't hold,
the valley floods
the hands shake
lighting another cigarette.

In what place to feelings lay down to die?
Do they ever return to life after
crucified in the world of here and now?

In the lake of green dreams,
pale white faces haunt,
eyes in murky translusence stare
fixed as the northern star,
as cold as a promise.

Drink yourself to sleep
find your dreamless void,
wake to a barren dawn.

9/2003-rev.10/6/2006

Joseph Martin III

Fare Thee Well

We take our seats

doors slowly close

upon our emotional trains.

Pulling away

our eyes catch one another

before we dim in time's distance.

11/25/2006

Joseph Martin III

First Day

Eyes squinting in the golden glare
of Amsterdam's morning sun,
a thousand diamonds shimmering
in every windowpane.

Ankles twist and crack
on old cobblestones
through the curving spiral of streets
surely designed by madmen.

Along the Damrak trams
sing their clattering song.
Blowing like a breeze from cafes,
a clinking of cups on saucers
and glimpses of curious conversation
from strange new people with lives
concealed behind a foreign tongue.

Crazy boy with a steamer trunk
and a pocketful of dreams.
You want to be someone.

Too bad they don't sell
identities at the airport gate.

4/1996, rev 9/2004

Joseph Martin III

Full Bone Moon

Full bone moon pinned
To the night like a broach
On her soft velvet gown
Of stars and pearlescent skies.

If only for a moment
I could gaze upon you
Through another's eyes:
eyes of triumph
eyes of contentment
eyes of satisfaction
eyes of love.

But we both know
It is a foolish wish.
So shine your light,
Alabaster moon,
Upon this road.
Guide me where,
I do not not know.

Joseph Martin III

Henry Dorio

We were just fifteen-
you, me, and my best friend.
sitting inside the cool of your house
playing Dungeons and Dragons
on that Saturday afternoon
while sidewalks simmered in the sun

We hardly knew you at all.

You seemed rougher than us,
just a couple of steps from delinquent.
But for that afternoon we were friends,
and I even borrowed you a book.

We didn't know you at all.

On Monday morning
a teacher told us you were dead-
accidentally gone and shot yourself on Sunday.
But even we knew a rifle and a bullet in the head
is very rarely accidental, and we
were just fifteen.

Joseph Martin III

Ice Death

Warm before the fire,
snow melting with soft touch.

A sudden hesitation-
you have that distant sad look.

Once again the creeping chill
encroaches and encircles.

Long ignored feelings
hidden but felt none the less.

Your fire burns for a phantom,
all else but a substitute.

Withdraw into your dark void,
a lingering eternal death
bound in frozen longing.

9/5/2002 rev 8/27/2005

Joseph Martin III

In The Ascendancy Of Spring

For S.P.1932-1963

i
Winter takes leave.
for you
a little too late-

The deed is done.

Crawled inside
your monoxide womb-
the blood jet capped,
so no words squirt through.

First,
Second,
Third time's the charm.

ii
6 a.m.
crimson streaks across the purple sky,
stars perish in waves of fire.
6 a.m.
the devil's hour,
the hour I think of you.
Neither morning nor night,
only something worse.
Like a hole in the universe-
the love seeps out.

There is no salvation in confession
even cupped inside your father's stony ear.
Only words,
dry and crumbling,
fall stillborn from trembling lips.

Artistic madness
leaves much to be desired.

iii

So sleep quietly,
dark and troubled muse.
This world is no place for your kind.

1/1992

Joseph Martin III

Journey's End

And when she has cleared

from her mind

all unimportant things

I am still standing

there.

10/13/2006

Joseph Martin III

Let Me Be Your Drug

Souls drowning in the river
no future no hope nobody at all.
They're riding the wave,
dying in small doses
you already know.

O pretty baby
the worst lies are the ones we tell ourselves-
say them enough maybe they'll turn true.
The worst friend hands you the knife
and tells you it's all gonna be alright.

Stop.
Don't stop.
Don't matter to me.
I'm still right here
where I've always been.

But if you would
let me be your drug,
mend the holes instead
of filing the void.

Stars like you
should burn bright all their own.

8/2002

Joseph Martin III

Mary Magdalene The Younger

As the night waited expectantly
with its thousand disappointments
and as many desires gone unmet
as stars in a weary universe,
I sat in the shabby apartment
of my very good acquaintance
Mary Magadene the Younger,
hooker with a heart of gold plate,
sharing a bottle of wine while she
sat waiting for her next trick to call-
three more and she could make her rent.

All the while she lazily slashed and hacked
scars upon scars upon flesh across her arm
with a paperclip, since she knew her clientele's
attention would hardly ever wander there.

'Do you remember, '
She said never looking up
from her blood-art in progress,

'a time when you felt blessed
for a beautifully familiar face
greeting you with your
sleepy eyes each morning,
rather than the emptiness
of meaningless strangers
that hasten your escape? '

Staring into the red mystery
of my nearly empty glass,
I inhaled from my cigarette,
breathed it out long like a sigh,
and let my reply curl into the air,
'Unfortunately I do.'

Joseph Martin III

Memory Of A Channel Crossing

If you have ever been aboard a ship,
no, not a boat on a lake on a lazy Sunday,
but a real ship with decks on a sea or ocean,
perhaps then you have stood alone and stared
out from one of those decks to that flat grey desert.
No one else around but you and no sounds but those
of the endless, ceaseless lonely waves.

If you have ever done this
then you might know the feeling.

Older now and landlocked,
cigarette smoke rises and dissipates
like so many possibilities.

Joseph Martin III

Navigation

All wrong
The ship is off course
misdirected
drifting into a lifeless sea.

Does not matter how
Does not matter why
Drowned is still drowned
all the same.

Let us be stars again to one another
guide our souls to those tranquil waters
anchor to an immovable shore.

Joseph Martin III

Night Poem

Bored and lonely

night presses in

cold against the windows

the heart hibernates

in its own emptiness.

11/30/2006

Joseph Martin III

Nocturne

If ever the world could stand still, then it would be now.
If ever there was something to call beautiful, then it is her,
Sleeping, occasionally stirring, beside me in this bed,
Her lips parted in the knowing half-smile of contentment.

In this moment we are both immaculate,
Like children who have discovered a new color,
We are open and we are immersed,
Not yet afraid of drowning.

O sweet Night,
With your full moon conducting
An orchestra of stars and galaxies,
Let me hear your music just awhile longer.
Hold back the turbulent dawn as long as you can,
When this dream becomes one more memory.

Joseph Martin III

Ode To A Poem That Would Not Die

Ten years ago I think it was,
I might have been a little drunk at the time,
drinking in despair for a beautiful lost angel named Claire
(well, so she was a stripper with three husbands,
no divorces, a couple of stretch marks, and
a set of teeth just this side of straight, but
I don't see that makes much difference now) .

You were just a little poetic ejaculation,
nothing more than some artistic masturbation.
Yet out you came,
too late to abort,
and hardly something
anyone would want to adopt.

I loved you anyway,
and was satisfied enough
to think you were complete and whole
and could leave me be, except
every once in a great while
when I might just invite you out
and show off your cleverness
to my very, very, very, very close friends
(very close friends, indeed, for once you decide
to unleash your poetic gifts upon the world,
those are the only friends you ever have left) .

But no,
my poor co-dependent child,
you just had to keep running back to me
with some fractured phrase,
or rhyme all askew,
staring at me with your pitiful aliteraful eyes,
crying 'Daddy, please daddy, help me.'

This last time it was 2 a.m.,
I was having a rather pleasant dream
of whipping cream and a very educated girl
with a well-developed pair of frontal lobes.

KNOCK *KNOCK* *KNOCK*

(I recognized your rapping upon my chamber door...)

And in you came, dragging
that dangling participle like
some poorly severed limb.

God, please dear God,
let this end.
O little poem,
child of mine,
it is time for some tough love.

You are no Shakespere sonnet,
you are not even a Bukowski on a bad day,
(and I'm sure he had more than a few) .
But neither are you some sloppy, sappy, store-bought rhyme.
So revel in the fiery radiance
of an imperfection that is yours alone.

And try not to do me in.
Because if anything should happen to me,
it most surely would be
the death of you.

6/2004

Joseph Martin III

Pilgrim Overheard On The Way To Calvary

Why hello George!

It's been a long while-

summer of 75? hard to tell.

How's the wife

the kids,

the house,

the dog,

the cat,

and all that which makes

a heavenly life?

What a fine cross

you carry today.

Make it yourself?

How long did you labor

to craft something so fine?

Does its weight strain your back?

Mine feels of lead.

I say now dear George,

why don't we make a pair:

I've a hammer

you've some nails.

We'll find a perfect spot

beneath this purple night

crucify ourselves up

good and right.

1986-rev.10/4/2006

Joseph Martin III

Prayer For The Living

Sun sinking
stone dropping
rose falling
upon dirt and ash

What did you attain?
Did you learn too late
to tell the trivial from the precious?
Time slips down and away.

Metal, plastic, and wires
have no memory to save
no love or comfort to offer.

Only flesh and blood,
the living bones,
keep you from Hell.

8/2003

Joseph Martin III

Promise

A few years ago
I promised myself
to stop my silly suicide games.
At least while my parents
would have to bury me.

Sometimes
like a bathtub with its plug pulled,
when all colors run from my world
and it takes half a day
just to
decide
to take
a shower,
that promise is harder to keep.

Joseph Martin III

Pumpkin Man

Nurses call him
Pumpkin Man.

Orange and bloated
Over-ripened belly,
So distended you'd think it
Might just suddenly burst.
His skin is cool and waxy
Like some perverse plastic fruit.

This jack-o-lantern with neither grin
Nor luminescent glow in the eyes.
Mouth agape, eyes staring and unfocused,
Seeing or not seeing
Dreaming or not dreaming
Only he could say
But he does not speak.

If Death has a color
What would it be?
Flamboyant red or somber black,
Or perhaps white is the perfect shade?

I see death in dull brown and ochres,
The liquid diet of the PEG tube,
Secretions suctioned from nasogastric and
ventilator tubes, or drained from Foley catheters
And rectal pouches into foul-smelling bags
Collected and saved at the foot of the bed.

So to you of great pretense
Or with no time for kindness
And even less for generosity,
Forgive me if I smile and stare
At the spot where you and I stand
Living in the shadow of the Pumpkin Man.

11/5/2004 rev 3/31/2005

Rememberance Of A Child

For Paula and other survivors of sexual abuse...

Innocent and forgotten one,

where was your polished cradle

and blanket of white roses?

Where was the slow sad music,

one final solemn adaggio

to sing your soul to rest?

And where were the tears,

one for every future memory deprived,

from mourners veiled in black?

There was none of this.

No body was found,

or even reported missing

by those you think might notice.

The ignorant know not the difference

between the living and the dead.

She knows the difference:

In distant galleries of her dreams
she meets her own young ghost,
together they cry.

Joseph Martin III

Remembering A Channel Crossing

If you have ever been aboard a ship,
no, not a boat on a lake on a lazy Sunday,
but a real ship with decks on a sea or ocean,
perhaps then you have stood alone and stared
out from one of those decks to that flat grey desert.
No one else around but you and no sounds but those
of the endless, ceaseless lonely waves.

If you have ever done this
then you might know the feeling.

Older now and landlocked,
cigarette smoke rises and dissipates
like so many possibilities.

Joseph Martin III

Sacrifice

You can never know love until you allow another entry into the very passages of your soul. You must let them in or else love becomes a dry dusty book filled with memory and empty words. Your love will become barren and lifeless, though many of the world will tolerate such a cold hollow love. The truest of love is such a rare find and thirsty men will drink dirty water if that is all that is offered. You can even lie to yourself and say your dirty water is really from a cool pure stream, but when the day comes and you find another who knows lie from truth, illusion from reality, then you will find yourself in confusion and pain. You say you want love that is complete and whole, but are you prepared for such a path? Are you ready to accept the responsibility for the care and protection of another's heart, their soul, and to unflinchingly entrust your own to their care? Will you lay yourself inside the temple, before the altar, giving all that you have been, all that you are, and all that you will ever be? Will you last through the uncertainty, the doubt, the self-destructive voices in your own heart that scream out that you are neither worthy of giving nor receiving such a beautiful gift?

What shall be the reward for your offering?

For when the gift is shared between two people, then, even in death, their sorrow shall find comfort in the fact there was no business left unfinished, no words left unspoken, for their love revealed in every word and action. There will be nothing more to want or need in this life.

8/30/2002 rev 8/27/2005

Joseph Martin III

Sleeping In The Death Zone

Dream realized

you are king of thin air

and black toes.

Upon immortality's frozen throne

you remain for seasons yet to come

sitting beside the Second Step.

1/6/2007

Joseph Martin III

Sometimes

Sometimes it is
the low clank of the dinner plate
striking the stainless steel sink
followed by the ting
of a solitary fork.

Sometimes it is
the slow soft burn
of the 40 watt bulb
in the reading lamp
hovering over the bed.

Sometimes it is
the rising and falling
of your own air-filled chest,

and nothing else
that reminds you that you are alone.

You could rage like Rilke's tiger
in your sheet-rocked prison world, or
closing your eyes you can let
the atoms in your fingertips
touch the invisible waters all around
of oxygen and carbon dioxide
and feel a universe
that knows no strangers.

Joseph Martin III

Sophie

Warm eyes inviting
framed by soft dark hair.
The smell of perfume
tinged with sweat.

Foolish men dream of love
but the thorns around your flower
are sharp and quick.

4/1996, rev 9/2004

Joseph Martin III

Souls On Fire

One day
he noticed the way
words pass from lips into air
then fall onto the floor
to scurry and scuttle into emptiness,
and he went completely mad.

Now the days have no need for names,
for him, living ghost of bone and blood,
who rarely speaks but watches instead,
or more correctly, sees like someone
seeing past a cloudy lens straight
into the heart of the world.

Man in a grey suit walking to work:
he is burning.

Woman with a stroller walking through the park:
she is burning.

Old man with wrinkled trembling hands:
he too is burning.

They are all burning.
We are all burning

At night he sleeps
and the dream is always the same:
a world flat and colorless, filled with so many,
so many souls on fire, so many consumed,
aching one day to swim in blue oceans.

Joseph Martin III

Sunset Swim

Shadows grow deep and long
across orange sands where the last
of the day's footprints surrender to the surf.

He squints staring into that fading sun,
that dies each day and says goodbye
in bursts of color upon cloud, sea, and sky.

All of his disappointments,
all of his attachments,
he sets in a pile beside his clothes,
before he takes one more look
over his shoulder with one deep breath.

Beneath slow tentative steps,
sand gives way to water,
colder than he remembers.

Swimming towards that dying sun,
he thinks he hears a small flock of seagulls

watching from the beach wishing him well,

or maybe it is simply the roar of the waves in his ears?

Joseph Martin III

The Ending In Perfection

When I close my weary eyes

a blurred shape sharpens,

the final act is formed,

a closing stanza realized.

All time stops

with that unmistakable

ear-splitting crack,

expires with a dull sad thud.

6/4/2008

Joseph Martin III

The I

It is the I not the you
It is only the me not the we

obsessed with receiving
arrogant in its complacency

speaking easy platitudes
selfishness masked as confidence
fear masked as unconcern
cruelty masked as wisdom

keen sight that is blind
imprisoned in freedom

it wants to be known
it wants to be understood
it will do as it wants

like a once deep great river
now dammed and held back
its small shallow trickles
ache in vain to reach the green sea.

9/7/2002, rev 3/2005

Joseph Martin III

The Jewel Is In The Lotus

Grey cold night
wind bumps its head
against warm windowpanes.

Your head upon my chest
hair unfurled in my fingers
you hear my heart
I feel you breathe
time and gravity suspended.

The world's humdrum drone
of cars and telephone lines
swallowed in the stillness.

Behind closed eyes
painful verses slumber
weary thoughts fluff their pillows.

In tomorrow's killing sun
fears will stretch and yawn
and our hearts will again break

in a hundred small ways.

But for now the mind's camera captures
like the slow fast-forward of the flower bloom
eternity unfolding in the now
as quick and deep
as a sigh.

10/12/2006

Joseph Martin III

The Last Twilight

If at the end of all things we could stand
upon the darkening shores of the last twilight,
every human soul now perfected in imperfection,
once bright stars and swirling galaxies dim,
all that is and all that was, even night itself
enfolds like a dying rose as endless time runs dry,
into the everlasting emptiness before our unblinking eyes.

We still would not know for sure His unwavering Love.
Our chained hearts still strain against our chests asking
to be free from an eternal sorrow only mankind knows.
Smiles will rise to meet His great and good heaven only when,
we watch, like so many long-lost children running to their mother,
all tears fall back into the sea.

Joseph Martin III

The Lost Child

Hidden child, why should you be
buried deep inside your mother's heart
a windowless room like some living tomb
floor soaked in so many unshed tears?

Abandoned.
Alone.
Unwanted.
Unloved.

I cannot say I saw you at first
though a silent voice told me you were there.
In your mother's quick rage and whirlwind of hurt
I see you calling out.

The world sometimes is a horrid place
for little girls and big ones alike.
We all take a slice of that painful pie,
some take more, some take less,
you took more than most could take.
Ask me why it must be this way
I can only dry your tears and say I just don't know.

A little girl's life should be filled with
moments of softness and kindness,
and love should flow through it
like the warm summer sun.
Did you ever know these moments,
of innocence protected,
a body respected?

If they were ever there at all
then they were a fleeting tease of a life
you should but could not have had.

And now your mother does her best
trying so hard to save you child
by saving the souls of the damned.
Was that your idea little girl?

Maybe you thought if she gave of herself,
to the point of leaving none for herself,
to the very ones of this world that hurt her
like those that hurt you
one day the bastards would see the error of their ways
and say they had changed and were sorry.
And you could feel needed and wanted again.
Is that why she puts up with things
and says "It's okay."

It is not okay.
It is not right.
Under neither man nor God.
There is no reason for it.

All the bastards
All the SOB's
They must learn to save themselves
for they only know to use and abuse but not to care.

But enough of these things dear child.
I do not have all the answers for you right now,
but perhaps we might find a start.

This room is too dark
the view too narrow.
Come with me into the sunshine
out of the caves and into the
gardens of the heart.

And in that place know
it is okay to cry for what you have lost
and what you fear you might never gain.

But know lost little child that when I hold your mother,
gently stroke her hair and speak of my love for her
telling of her wondrous place in this world
I am also speaking to you.

8/24/2002

To A Cynical Woman

Autumn wearing robes of orange.

Sunsets painted in violet hues.

Dreams floating across azure skies.

The romantics' tools born

out of the wide-eyed child

we all once knew so well.

A thin golden thread

too often cut on the shining edge

of logic and reason.

Leave this mask

beside the beckoning river.

We can still walk once more

embraced by the amber meadow.

We are too young

to feel so cold.

The world will always wait.

1988/rev.2006

Joseph Martin III

To Those Suicide Has Left Behind

For those

that grieve.

For those

that hurt.

For those

that curse.

For those

that cry in silence.

For those

that want to understand:

In the desert you might live

four, maybe even five days

with nothing to drink but

the sand and hot breezes.

So how many years could you live
if in your heart all hope was dead
and all roads led to a ceaseless pain?

Let your tears be water for the flowers of the lost heart,
turn away from tragic thoughts of waste and loss,
give your anger up to a bright May sky:
all is as it was meant to be
even for those who decided the world was too much.

Do not fear for them anymore.

Their tired souls now find rest at last in the light
of the kind Creator's Grace, Mercy, and Love
they thought they would never find in the dark sorrow of their life.

6/2/2008

Joseph Martin III

Together And Alone

Between the two

sitting next to one another,

thoughts rise and fly

seeking their form in words.

Finding none, they

drift into the emptiness

through an open window.

10/2/2006

Joseph Martin III

Tug Of War

One hand towards
One hand away

One mind for
One mind against

The heart wants
the heart mistrusts

Upon what word or deed
does the matter turn?

Leave the outcome to fate
and all will tear apart.

Leave the matter to faith
and all parts become whole.

8/29/02

Joseph Martin III

Vagabond Heart And The Winter's Night Girl

Where did you come from
pale freckled girl with soft skin
and shining mischeveous eyes?
What funny power it is
that decided to cross our paths.

What could you find in this quiet man
and his thin bony frame? This man
whose life has been like an airport
where people come and go connect
to their next flight, but he has learned
never to be the final destination.
In time goodbyes outnumber hellos
and all good things will pass.

There is possibility in your kiss
desire in the sweat forming upon your breasts,
a special place beyond the physical world
of caresses and deep thrusts,
a place where every once in awhile
time slows, the walls of our egos drop
we are left vulnerable and exposed
and then our souls touch.

Could you have known when you said
you felt wanted and needed
it was the very same precious gift
you gave to him?

But what of tomorrow?
When the leaves are dropping from the trees
and winter reminds us how fleeting
and fragile all feelings are.
He knows this too well
and you have a life already your own.

Could you make a room in your heart
for one other? A comfortable room filled with
laughter and music and paintings and poems

and candles that burn with a passion not to go out
reminding us of one another when we must be apart.

I have seen time steal away most things,
and beautiful feelings vanish into thin air
until all that is left is the echo of goodbye.
The vagabond heart knows the risk
and can live content in the gifts of today.

But he has heard of a rare place
worth all the risk of eventual loss, a place
where all wandering can stop, a place
where our hearts and minds and souls can orbit each other like great stars
burning
feeding us within one another's warm never-ending light
so strong not even the world can stop.

1/29/2006

Joseph Martin III

Vegas

I see you
In the eternal neon twilight
Of your artificial magnificence
And shimmering facades
Rising from the dark flat sea.

Our Lady of Opulence
The faithful come to you
Seeking their instant salvation
In the fanfare of clanging bells
And flashing lights.

But you are vain and indifferent.
How many of your followers' prayers
Have gone unanswered!

From Fremont to Flamingo
The heretics push shopping carts,
Your defrocked priestesses sell
Themselves for needles and pipes.
The excommunicated are on hands and knees
Combing dingy carpets in cheap rooms.
At the Greyhound station scared-eyed
Teenage runaways await your judgment.

They are doomed to go unremembered
Like so many two-bit gangsters
Buried in your desert.

3/31/2005

Joseph Martin III

Wallflower

I am a fading shadow
Leaning in a chair against the wall.

My dreams have been blown like
Loose pages from the book of my life.

The past surrounds and crushes me,
Memories stealing away both present and future.

Words become dusty scattered things,
With neither purpose nor potency to express.

I am passing out of your reach,
Where even your sympathy and anger cannot touch.

All that is left to me
Is to swallow my story
And leave no stain.

4/1/2005

Joseph Martin III

Whispers At Dusk

Early evening sweeping
the streets in golden orange.
Broom in hand I am sweeping
dust and cigarette butts,
revelling in the ritual of the ordinary.

First comes the feeling,
then the thought-
you are out there my love
though we have not yet met.

Still I can hear your heart singing
through dirty streets and alleyways,
the dullness amplifies the brightness
of your quiet expectant yearning.

Where are you now sweet woman
of heartbreak and untapped joy?
Do you know your call has been heard?

We are already together
just waiting for time
to catch up to us.

8/29/2005

Joseph Martin III

Wings

Once
I dreamed I grew
great silver wings
to take flight my soul
beyond these mortal pains
beyond these earthly chains.

But how could I have known?
It was the hunting season.

Joseph Martin III