Terry Dawson(1955)

Terry Dawson was born in 1955 to farming parents in the former British colony of Southern Rhodesia. He has been a soldier, game keeper, beekeeper and farmer. He lives now in rural eastern Zimbabwe.
A Calf Is Born

On Simagogas ridge at dawn
To elephant cow a calf is born.
Renewal is a wondrous thing
And all the clan stand round in ring.

The mother speaks:
Who would rob me of my child
The future leader of the wild.
To elephants, kin is the word
The sacred bond that binds the herd.

The calf speaks:
And who would have me orphan be
For my mother's ivory.
Wild we, mother and I
In wild, wild land of dry.

The elephants of the ring speak:
Now this is the lore of the hefty grey
The old ones mind as the small ones play
And all things wild are our concern;
The wise ones teach and the young ones learn.

Terry Dawson
A Campaign Revisited

Africa once again was wracked with pain
As warfare stalked the land
And through the years of the copious tears,
Few could understand
That death and life in the time of strife
Was purely a matter of chance
Thrills were brisk; men took great risk
As they danced that deadly dance.

It's a blazing hot day and who can say what the future holds in store,
In the dust and the heat, a soldier's heartbeat marks the steady passage of time,

When approach in file at around one mile, terrs, and they number several score. Soldiers spot the advance and leaving nothing to chance, they swiftly deploy in a line.

A shot rings out; an anguished shout - a firefight thus began
With so many guns blazing the din is amazing; it is a chaotic afray!
Confusion all about, a cry and a shout, each must do as he can
There's a strangled curse, a man falls to earth, he utters a cry of dismay.

A brief time the fight rages till the enemy disengages; melts away as thief in the night
Of a sudden all is still, tally the toll if you will - casualties lie all about like litter. Bandaged, drip in arm, the cas-evac, pale but calm, is chopper-loaded for homeward flight
Whilst on the ground fresh troops abound to carry anew the fight to the quitter.

Now let it be known of those who have flown: northward they go and with haste Pace quickened by fear, and far and near the bush beats to an urgent drum. They dare not slack or even look back; the hard fact must be faced
That the peril at rear is in high gear to complete the work already begun.

Silent they pass through the golden grass
Toward the sand pits of Miami
On and on through the Longcut Pass
And the air is hot and clammy

Seldom they pause for they have good cause to make haste; men are hot on
There's scarcely a breeze through the leafless trees; lack of rest starts to take its toll.
And then it comes where the Angwa runs that the chasers see those that they tail.
With pulses quick that follow-up stick hear blood in their ears like a thunder roll.

With a burst of speed, sufficient to need, the pursuers set out at the double
Around on the flank near the left hand bank, unseen they bypass those they persue.
They deploy on the ridge quite near to the bridge, and steel themselves for trouble
With the enemy near it seems quite clear that fell strife will surely ensue!

'Hold fire', breaths the sarge as the terrs loom large; 'I'll shoot when the time is right.'
There's a crack then a roar and, as the sarge soon saw, his plan had served him well
These terrs, they rue their fate but all too late for theirs is a terrible plight
Over half are hit; there's no help for it - they flee, comrades left where they fell.

Let it be said that eight are dead; of the original twelve remain four,
And this remnant band makes a desperate a stand in a hollow down by the river
It is a time in hell and it doesn't end well for at last they fight on no more,
A stark silence fell on that deathly dell, a silence to make bold men shiver.

Twelve spirits ascend by the river's bend and go to the place that all spirits go
Silent they pass through the golden grass
Like the wind; it's quite uncanny.
On and on over the Longcut Pass
The air no longer hot and clammy.

Then heard at last, a kudoo-horn blast and they abide with their ancestors staunch
Limited no more as they were before; strange powers to them are born.
With their souls unfurled in the spirit world, they have it in their power to launch
The dark powers of the night and the afterworld's might, against those that do not conform.

So let it be said for the sake of the dead
  That war is a desperate affair.
Their lives are lost; it's a terrible cost
And who will in later times care?
And win or lose, most would choose
  To palaver if given the chance,
But never was it so, so off to war men go,
  There to dance that deadly dance.

Terry Dawson
The spring swallows return anew;
I search for the elusive blue;
Sky-riders of unequalled grace,
Conjures to sight likeness of you.

My mind drifts now to far off place,
While in my heart an empty space;
An emptiness that will remain
Till filled by woman's charm and grace.

And so my thoughts return again
To the blue hills above the plain,
Where resides one who is new hope
To thirsting land of soothing rain.

A cottage stands upon the slope,
Within a girl is making soap.
Gardens there where white flowers grow
Beneath trees hung with monkey rope.

Now this one thing I humbly know:
All that I have I'd fain bestow
Upon this one, that from it flow
Chance of companionship's warm glow.

Terry Dawson
A Dream

How lovely she looks by the firelight there
Voluptuous woman with her raven hair.
With beckoning finger: hey plowman draw near,
In low loving murmurs she whispers his ear.

There's a furnace within her where great fire burns
Her smooth skin glows hotly; a wonderment churns
In heart of the plowman who grows in desire
At the smoldering temptress who sets him on fire.

And into the cauldron unheeding they go
United in rhythm as hot as it's slow
Till dawn by the fire in mutual embrace
The passion-spent plowman has sight of her face.

Terry Dawson
A Hardworking Wind

Yesterday's bird-busy garden is gone:
A hardworking wind got up in the night.
A wind, to hear it, with much on its mind,
Impatient of trifles; with much to get done.

Songless this morning the birds look out
Upon a moody, unsure-of-itself dawn
Beneath wet, rain-swollen clouds
Hung low, rank on rank.

Even the bulbul, herald of dawn, is subdued
The Heuglin, daybreak's minstrel, is dumb
And high on his post, the lark holds his tongue.
Distant thunder rolls about in the foothills.

Terry Dawson
A Nursery Rhyme For Young Imperialists

Mzilagazi knew the way to spoil his brave ndunas' day
Up in the hills to their dismay he'd throw them off the mountain.
And his repute then fared and neared and old black raven he declared
Mzilagazi is most feared, old man Dingane not countin'.

Then one called Rudd brought paper there; old Lobengula thought it queer
And his great impis stand and stare at Rudd and his Concession.
And then a thing that brought the dark, while in the tree-top sang the lark,
Old Lobengula placed his mark upon the Rudd Concession! !

By wagon and horse the white man came through lands of wild tribe untame
And ever since have borne the blame for bringing in great progress.
Then in place where sets the sun a modern city was begun
From where new nation was well run heralding a time of progress

At Bembezi please be assured the six pounders there loudly roared
And kept at bay the heathen hoard turning the tide of battle.
Lobengula northward fled, the Matabele nation bled
Then when all was done and said the victor took the cattle.

Now Wilson led a light patrol, their mounts and speed gave them control
But all of that was over-rolled; a tragic fate was dawning.
Now back to back the valiant band faced the foe and made their stand
And all the world will understand there followed time of morning.

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Ambitious Milner, so we're told had eye upon the Jo'burg gold
The plan was laid, the scheme was bold; said Rhodes, we'll simply take it!

Now Jameson raided the Rand, the raid did not quite go as planned.
The Uitlanders failed to lend a hand and poor Jim didn't make it!

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Great witch doctors they tried and tried - white numbers grew, the rains denied
And furthermore the cattle died; it was a great disaster!
The mediums they read the signs, they said of whites who dig in mines
It's them who conjure these designs and cause us this disaster.
Our ancestors they bid us rise said wizened old Mlilo wise
And all the whites will flee in cries, their bullets will turn to water!
Now all the witches cry and shout, Mlilo's dead without a doubt,
Shot through the heart by Yankee scout whose bullets weren't of water!

Now this is the plan we beautiful, upon the night the moon is full
We'll slash and stab and burn and kill every single white man!
In dark of night they stealthy crept then upon the sleeping leapt
They slit their throats, the angles wept, this is the native war plan!

The scattered whites were scared and tense, but made a plan for their defence
To Bulawayo all and thence into a hasty laager.
The thing became a phoney war, the 'creep and pounce' would serve no more
The rising stalled and that's for sure into a boring saga!

Over the tapping Morse key bent the hero Routledge hasty sent:
The natives here are malcontent! Mazoe is in laager! !
With dashing flair in martial art the daring colonel played his part
He hasty made an armored cart; his name was Pennyfather.

Into the air a cheer was sent as down the road the colonel went
To fix the ones of malcontent; eternal rest thereafter!
And fast approached the dark of night as Salisbury's fortress came in sight
For all about was great delight with cries and cheers and laughter.

The Shona nation on its knees, while hung from stout msasa trees
Two witches turning in the breeze
And peace returned thereafter.
Now please attend this all concerned, this is the lesson to be learned
That strife and war should both be spurned or bye bye life and laughter.
Or -
In peril's face by courage earned freedom from disaster!

Terry Dawson
A Poem For An Eagle

Wildest of all the wild things
Is the king of the hunting birds.
Wild-one that to the wilderness clings
Where the olden ways are preferred.

When mankind comes and with him brings
His dogs and flocks and herds,
A disquiet comes upon this king
As though misstep's occurred...
And at such coming spread his wings
For wilds undisturbed.

Terry Dawson
A Prayer At Dawn

When light has not yet paled the east
I run for exercise
Down moonlit bushveld path I go
Beneath still stary skies
Where dwell the creatures of the night
(Darkness their realm of choice)
They fill the air with many sounds
Till sunrise still their voice

The exertion invigorates
My body and my mind,
Fresh, cold air invades my lungs
As foot-falls rhythm find
Then through the cool dew-scented air
Comes rush of wind on wings
As buzzard launches into flight;
My heart with gladness sings.

Dawn's rays fall first on that high bird
While beneath in dim light
A treasureland of wilderness
Is slow revealed to sight.
As rising sun transforms the world
Soft colours morph out of grey
A spirit stirs within my heart
And I am moved to pray -

Fill all my darkness with warm light;
Illuminate the way
Along the daunting path I choose
To journey this new day.
Sure-footed, steady stride be mine
On my self-chosen trail,
Let courage conquer quailing heart
That points the way to fail.

Terry Dawson
A Proposal

HIM:
Know this my love
Your Lord above
Gave you your strength to use
And though you may
For guidance pray
Your path is yours to choose
And trust your heart
True course to chart
Do not Will and God confuse

HER:
Who more than me
My weakness sees
I need His word as guide
For I am frail
And fear to fail
Without God at my side
My fickle will
Uncertain still...
These things I do confide.

HIM:
Now let me speak
She is not weak
Who feels temptation surging
Yet does not bend
For she transcends
The lure of that call's urging
And strongly goes
Among such foes
Victorious emerging!

HER:
The strength you see
Comes not from me
But from my God above.
You poor lost troll
Your questing soul
Knows not the way of dove
For you don't see
What's clear to me:
The heart of God is love!

HIM:
Now hear you me
While that may be
There's more than that to you!
The fact endures
Free will is yours
And you must use it true.
Sweet girl of grace
Will you make space
Within your heart for two?

Terry Dawson
A Stonecrossed Grave (A Poem In Remembrance)

Amid the msasas beside the hill
A stonecrossed grave there is. It will
Remind wayfarers of the dreadful cost
To one who ventured, fought and lost
To vanquish evil; alas it prospers still.

Now of the brotherhood who dared
We are the ones that fortune spared
Ours is the task to guard the gains
And honour well the still remains
Who fell when wickedness had reared.

And he at rest beside the hill:
His sacrifice be with us still.
Duty, honour, courage ever.
Forsaken, lost, forgotten never.
His unfinished task, ours to fulfil.

Terry Dawson
A Sudden Waterfall

With quiet force along its course the river makes its way;
Its waters ride through channels wide unceasing night and day.
Its stealthy hush now thunderous rush as falling waters lunge
And dazzling white in bright sunlight, the mist-veiled crashing plunge
Where boiling foam comes roiling home down the rocky chasm
Amid the roar I stand in awe of nature's mighty spasm.

Updrafted sprays in curling ways wets all the leafy verge
As water drips from myriad tips where moss and waters merge.
Below, like world forgot, a boiling pot has gouged a mighty pool.
The fall-made pond is hung fronds shading the rippled jewel.
While calming all, the charming call of liquid-throated frog;
Blue butterflies and dragon flies adorn wet gleaming log.
Now as by balm the waters calmed, obtaining grey-green gleam;
With quiet force on level course the currents once more stream.

Terry Dawson
A Tear In Her Eye

Through highland field a river streams
Where aging youth is lost in dreams.
In the lines of her face a story told
Of flawless youth now over rolled;
Of a dance of time that has waltzed by
And the recall of it is a tear in her eye.

When fragile bloom has had its day
Its beauty dulls and fades away
But inward beauty which is pure
Emits a shine that lasts the more,
Like morning sun passed through the trees
It has a glow that never leaves!

Terry Dawson
A Tribute

As autumn slides to winter chill
The westering sun sinks down below the hill
Tilled at last the final rows
The farmer turns and homeward goes.

Brother of ours, of our life part
In whose chest beat noble heart;
Who tilled the fields and reared the stock
You bore the shield, you were the rock.
But now your race of life is run
Your long and winding road is done.
And those along that road you met
Beheld one tough and gruff, and yet
Concealed from the glancing eye
Of the casual passer by
Lay mighty heart made rich by deeds,
That valued work and knew of needs;
Which in the pursuit of Right
Shirked no trouble, feared no fight;
A heart that many things forgave
A heart that gave and gave and gave.
Wholehearted he, without a thought
Great-heartedly unknowing taught
Bold lessons of life to sure inspire,
Those wayfarers that quested higher.

But now
As sunset's golden glow grows dim
I look skyward and remember him
Whose greatest crop is not yet grown;
Who by his life-example has sown
Strong seeds in hearts of men.

Terry Dawson
Against Wrongs Done Me

Against wrongs done me
My spirit raged
Hatred-blinded, I do not see
That lust for vengeance
Keeps my spirit caged.

Calamities I wish upon my foe,
In vivid dreams I see
His fell afflictions grow and grow...
In waking world I hate also;
This thing, I can't leave it be!

All-demanding becomes my ire,
Unstinting do I spend
To fuel the all-consuming fire...
But no fulfillment my heart finds;
In downward spirals I descend.

Now unfurls a new design,
Unscripted lines are spoken,
Up-ending all cruel schemes of mine -
As early death now stalks my halls;
My olden ways are broken.

But spared from death, I behold
The world in different light,
New horizons promise gifts untold.
Sunshine pours like healing balm
Into my long, hate-filled night.

My renewed heart forgives now all
Of him who earned my enmity
Swiftly departs the darkened pall
Of the all-overshadowing cloud;
In that moment I am free!

Glad, unbound, my soul exalts,
My spirit learns to sing
Unencumbered by past faults,
Old fetters cast away,
The crippled bird takes wing!

Terry Dawson
An Empty Chair

A fierce respect we hold for those
Who fall in battles glare,
But different truth a family knows
Whose feasts have empty chair.

An emptiness invades the gut
All dreams and hopes turn cold
And from the road into the rut
When the grim news takes hold.

So daunting is the way to go,
No self-reproach unsaid.
Grief's hurts renewed at each cock's crow
When ice creeps into bed.

The splendors of the breaking dawn
Or sunset's wondrous lights
No more inspire cold hearts that mourn,
And beauty holds no delights.

Now two score years lie in-between,
Yet grief's hurts still recur
And dwell upon what might have been -
All things that never where.

Terry Dawson
An Old Bull Dies

In the month of October
As dry as dust
The elephants wait
For the rain that must
Descend from the heavens
In life-giving pall
When a million drops
Of mercy fall.

But the drought is a harsh one;
The vision is blurred
And the dry takes a toll
On the elephant herd.
So a rugged old bull
In thirsting's grim thrall
Will answer the beckon
Of the wild's last call.

Terry Dawson
Baboons

Along that wild figs great bough
The dog baboon advances now
With nonchalant stride and easy pride
As only baboons know how.

And in his calm, unhurried quest
He pauses first to take a rest
And have a scratch and then catch
The morning sun as arrive the rest.

He knows that the sun-ripened figs
Are borne on the most slender twigs
And of his troop, the lighter group
Fares better in those flimsy rigs

Clutching firm to the swaying limb
He gathers ripe fruits close to him.
And at leisurely pace he feeds is face,
Working around the outer rim.

Presently when he's had his fill,
His nonchalant air is with him still,
With barking voice he takes his choice
Of maiden fair and works his will.

And in his wild life divine
He leans back in supine recline
And boldly declares by the look that he wears:
Lo, all that I behold is mine.

Terry Dawson
Balance

In this life we bear
In equal portion
Mix dare
With caution

At lightning speed
Here comes Louise
With scarce a heed
Flying on the high trapeeze.

While shy of fire,
Terry, treads with care
Upon tort wire
Tightly drawn
A few feet in the air.

Terry Dawson
Chances Lost

In early dawn before cock's crow
I see in dream someone I know
Some telltale trait alerts my gaze
I feel a warmth inside me grow.

And I recall her winning ways
As sunlight that on water plays
And in her heart I had a place
But fortune sent us different ways.

Now in half light I see her face
My soul cries out for her embrace
Stirred are desires, noble and base
I want her all, I fear disgrace.

Terry Dawson
Collaring The Elephant

Entranquiled by a darted potion
Upon his bushheld range,
The elephant's world is in slow motion
It seems almighty strange.

Presently he falls down in slumbers;
People rush to his side
For they would track him as he wanders
His range in easy stride.

And when his paraplegia clears,
He is enhanced by tech
For a transmitter now he wears
In collar round his neck.

And by the means of this device,
As all will surely guess
The bearings, when they're measured twice,
His whereabouts express.

Terry Dawson
Courageous Girl (About A Blind Elephant)

Sightless wild giant
Misfortune athwart her
Resilient, defiant,
Helped on by her daughter.

Born to the wilds
The great matriarch sage
Helped, cherished and guided
In benighted old age.

So harken you humans
Whose souls gold has bought
And ponder what lesson
This wild tale has taught.

Terry Dawson
Double Standards

When wrong is done
We must condemn,
Prevaricate must none.
When innocents are slain
By truth we honour them.

Now we see unfurled,
In clear and hideous light
A double-speaking World
Some wickedness is condoned
Making darker darkest night.

Late the Double-standard learns
As innocent blood runs deep
That the fire both ways burns
The pendulum knows but to and fro
First forward, then back sweep

Terry Dawson
Dry Wilderness (Or, The Gemsbok)

Proud antelope, monarch of sands
Surveys Namib's hot, arid lands
Beholding all with practised eye
And veteran's heart that understands.

Such awful beauty draws a sigh,
With aching hearts we wonder why
Is made wild beauty so severe?
The human soul begs make reply:

In wondrous wilds beyond compare
Where passing traveler need take care
For beauty and hazard dwell in twain...
Yet blessed are they that linger there.

For wilderness, mountain or plain
Bring damaged heart to whole again
And you, proud beast with flowing mane
May long your kingdom bear your reign.

Terry Dawson
Flame Lily

Upon the bouldered kopjie's side
A flower to stir a nations pride
Borne on scrambling plant, a flame;
Symbol of honour and acclaim
To those who once the world defied
In nation bearing Rhodes's name.

Terry Dawson
For An Artist That Died

Stilled now is the capturing brush
That marked the canvas taut
By which the wild world's finest scapes
As works of art were wrought

A sheltering tree has fallen down
The forest is bereft
Yet richer we that knew of you
Though now our hearts are cleft

For slipped at last the failing ties
That tethered flesh and bone
And launched now are adventures new
Out in the great unknown.

Terry Dawson
For Anzac Day

For Anzac Day

When the owlet's whistle from its thorny loft tells of the setting sun,
Old fighting men bow down their heads for those who fell by the gun.
When the francolin's call from the ant heap top tells of a new day born
They're minded of their comrades lost by the hope-filled light of dawn.

Terry Dawson
For The Girl Who's Been In Hell

Now the kindly farmer ponders
On the girl who's been in hell.
With loving heart he wonders
How best to bring her back to well

Still then her friend the farmer
Thinks on her - poor damaged thing.
With warm heart, strives to calm her;
By love to mend her broken wing

He upon reflection sees
Her past curtails her future;
Old ghosts are her enemies,
But eyes-front the way is sure.

What better then than that she
Jump once more and touch the sky,
Laugh again as merrily
As once she did in time gone by.

Terry Dawson
Ghost Elephants

In Outeniqua's mountains dwell
A remnant few that honour well
The montane forest's ancient lore,
Steadfast as the enduring shore.

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Moist air comes in off of the sea
Climbing the hills of scenery
And feeds with rain that rich biome
That once to wildlife was home.

And through the mighty trees that grow
Vague phantom shadows come and go.
A fleeting glimpse that strikes the eye
Rekindles myth that will not die.

In olden day a balance dwelt
Upon the forest and the veldt
In days before the white men came
Was wild land alive with game

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The mountain range marks stark divide,
For dry the land on northern side
And there upon the wide Karoo
Resides the one that ever knew
That there in lands beyond the hills
A wondrous relic lingered still.

Her wild heart with nature kin,
Its natural rhythms beat within,
In oneness with the remnant few
Whose truth lives on midst mist and dew -

Ghost elephants that linger yet
Their ghostliness may all regret!
How better had progress passed by
This wonderland beneath the sky?
This wonderland now left to cry

Terry Dawson
Girl Of The Seasons

Girl of the Seasons
I think of these days -
Her loveliness is Reason,
Her reluctance dismays!

Her face is the Summer;
Young radiant girl
Her smile is the Springtime
When new leaves unfurl!

Her frown is the Autumn;
Joys dry up and fall
Her absence brings Winter
When loneliness calls.

Her laughter's a goblet
Of sweet Summer wine
And though her eyes sparkle,
The sparkle's not mine!

Terry Dawson
Good Bye My Friend

Good bye my friend, I can't be there
To drink to you or share
Old stories of the times gone by
And meet again friends not met since we were lads
Or talk of all the things we did, the times we had;
Of how the river flows and bends.
To reminisce, to laugh, to cry...
To silent contemplate and sigh
And wonder at the ambushing
By which the journey ends.

Terry Dawson
Great Horned Cattle Of Africa

The urgent lowing of a cow
Calling out to her calf apart
Disturbs the still of dawn, and now
Hark... herd-boys making early start

In cattle kraal with orange dust
And pronged as buy acacia thorns,
The young herd-boys exhibit trust
In Zebu cattle full of horns.

These great cattle - the tribal wealth
Providers of both milk and blood
That guaranty life and good health -
Await the day and chew the cud.

Terry Dawson
Gunner Dan

Young fresh-faced lads just like our dads,
By mail are called to arms.
And we set out, some glad some sad
From cities, mines and farms
And become lean and strong and sure
As trained we are in art of war
And gone for good that callow lad.

The plan is made the ambush laid
Invisible we lurk
Concealed by craft and grassy blade,
Prepared for lethal work.
But now we wait and wait and wait
Till on ninth day in morning late
Comes terror much delayed.

Some shots ring out, an urgent shout
Something about the right...
As din and tumult fill the air
Onward us young men fight.
We hardly know the gods to thank
In this desperate afry -
Our plucky gunner's turned their flank;
The fighting goes our way!
Thank god for Dan who makes a plan
That gets us out of strife!
When sudden comes a mighty sound -
Choppers whirl overhead.
Their cannons roar in grim downpour
Upon disheartened foe.
But from the hill there's shooting still...
A direct charge, no one prefers -
Nevertheless we try it.
But even as we win the day
Disquieting thought occurs:
Why has our gun gone quiet?

[pause]
The simple cross bears honoured name
Upon the tarnished brass.
Below a smaller script proclaims
How this end came to pass.
That Dan a fighting worrier bold
Was ever spared from growing old
As legend he became!

And every year from then till now
On the appointed date
We gather to remember how
The working of blind fate
Let our hearts beat but took our friend
Honour and glory without end
To you brave gunner Dan.

As natures wonders fill the soul
With reverence and with awe
Our comrades, you who paid the toll
In awful time of war
Stir in our hearts an awesome pride
Our kin, our friends as may betide
Honoured for evermore!

Terry Dawson
He Sees Again…

His eyes are glazed the grey-beard man
His mind is lost in thought
Transported to some distant place
Where once a battle fought.

The air is close the bush is thick
And fierce is the sun
Upon the seeming quiet place
Where once was violence done.

He hears again the brutal din
That tore the quiet asunder
And lived anew that fearful time
Till stilled again that thunder.

He sees once more the crumpled form
A single glance tells all.
Happy and quick his friend that morn
Had met his time to fall.

Still to this day those dauntless brave
Ignite in him wild pride
Far greater though his sorrowed pangs
At all the ones who died.

Terry Dawson
Heed You This!

Now slightly ajar stands the door,
To adult world; untried, unsure.
How is a tender heart to know
Which of the many ways to go?
Uncertainties must it endure;
Which seeds to plant and where to sow.

Though inexperience has it's cost,
The one well grounded is not lost.
Advantaged she that knows the rules
And spurns the idle words of fools;
Into whose heart is well embossed,
The gain in using worthy tools.

Know that strength in friendship lies,
And the worth of vast open skies,
Of wilderness that calms the heart,
Who's steady beating becomes part
Of natures soothing lullabies,
And of the wild world's healing arts.

Questing for lucre is vain task,
For gold's warm glow is surely mask,
That make it to appear as friend
To those whose selfworth need depend,
On gold's lustre in which they bask,
But brings to them heartache at end!

So make your way with quiet calm,
And work your will yet do no harm.
Know that gain at cost of repute
Is folly well beyond refute!
And know that reason and charm,
Are allies of yours in dispute.

Be evenhanded in dealing ways,
It earns you trust to last your days,
And do unto others (this is not new),
As you would have them do unto you.
For nothing so greatly dismays
As solemn word spoken untrue!

Terry Dawson
Hope

Hope is the desert grass that prospers best in adversity,
It is a seed awaiting rain.
Hope a reservoir against despair,
It is our sustaining larder in the lean times.
Hope is the heart's faith in a better tomorrow,
It is our bulwark against surrender!

Terry Dawson
If He Had Been Younger

Beneath a fine hat
That is fit for a queen
She rides a her horse bareback
Like a girl in a dream.
An old farmer wonders
As to what may have been
If he had been younger
When she was sixteen!

With youthful abandon
Her wild beauty shines
Like radiant sunlight
On fruit heavy vines.
The omens unhelpful
As good sense opines
The filly is prancing;
The stallion declines!

Terry Dawson
In The Land Of Shortages

And we're belting along on the pot-hole road
And the tyres are smoking at the weight of the load
The distance to go is yet more than we came
And there's nought on the gauge than the makers name.
Our note and our coin are locked tight in the banks
So we pray to the Lord and give him our thanks
And we hope that the garage we pass by the way
Might fill us to quarter 'cause it's our lucky day!

Terry Dawson
I've Met A Girl

I've met a girl
Louise her name.
Within I feel new strength unfurl
And I'm no more the same.

Strange to myself, now am I
Renewed in mind and heart,
My load lighter than before, and why? -
Her magic weaves its art.

Recipient me
Of friendship's gift
Strength-giver she
Sure, true and swift
As ever friend could be.

By her, unaware, is it arranged
That life comes anew into a soul,
And so is lonesomeness estranged;
A life reacquainted with its goal.

Terry Dawson
Like High Rising Hills

Elephants like ocean are power in motion,
Like high-rising hills their presence instills
Wonder in hearts of men.

But men are in lust for the elephants tusk.
As ever we muster poor trinkets of luster
As the great beasts march into final dusk.

Terry Dawson
Midnight Dreaming

And in the midnight dreaming time
Behold the one who could be mine
When moonlight dances in her hair
There's joyous warmth 'cause she is near.
Her winning ways and looks devine
Capture my heart, this maid of mine.

And in the dreaming, feelings stir
In wondrous swirls of him and her
And in the firelight shadows prance
And twine and part by random chance...
A brush of lips, o joy devine
And was it luck or by design?

Now in the dreaming's secret place
Merged shadows share a mutual space
And heartbeats like a slow-struck drum
Beat on together two as one
Slow rhythm rules the love embrace,
Hear trumpets blare, hear zithers strum!

Terry Dawson
Miss Hanaley

Miss Hanley
I plainly see
That you are rather grand
And if I may
I'd like to say
Give me your own fair hand.
I'll lead you where
The air is clear
In yonder mountain-land?

Miss Hanley
You are to me
My girl of sweet surprise.
The wide portals
Into your soul
Which are your lovely eyes
Reveal to me
A spirit free
On wings in wide blue skies

Miss Hanley
I dream of thee
And thy fine hair of red
And if I may
I'd like to say
Something I've never said
My sweetest dove
My lovely love
I love you heart and head.

Terry Dawson
Natures Bounty

A haunting voice calls clear and strong
To fill the fading sky
With soul-stirring dusk-time song;
A bushveld lullaby:
An owl to hold you in its thrall
In pearl bespotted plume,
Pours out its pure, spell-binding call -
A mind bewitching tune.

The harsh land so little signs
The bounty it contains
Nor foretells of it's designs
Yet this bird's song explains...
For nature is a treasure store
Not always easily found -
This haunting voice drives on once more
Mankind to Dreams profound!

Terry Dawson
Nelson Mandela (A Mock Epitaph)

Here rest the bones of Nel the sage
Who, when younger wouldn't
Stop from doing what he shouldn't.
But much later, when grey with age
Did by charm what all else couldn't.

Terry Dawson
Ode To Instant Messaging

Out of Transvaal’s wild bushveld wide
Rises blue mountain, and on its side
There does abide a woman on her own, Louise.

Across the continent has fickle fate
A farmer placed in lonely state
Who much of late dreams of her alone, Louise.

Now through thin air where eagles cry
Fleet the streams of binary numbers fly
With each reply the friendship's grown, Louise.

Born of these exchanges, friendship's song
Through common interests kindles strong
And prospers long, rich in shared affinities, Louise.

Terry Dawson
Once Your Voice Among Us Dwelt

Once your voice amongst us dwelt
But now is gone - the absence felt

And yet

Returning from the bouldered hills
Your rebounding echo never stills

You are the thunder calling rain
You are the strength to try again

You are the ox that draws the plow
The shading fig's most sturdy bough

You are the booming voice unbound
You are the voice of reason found

You are the steadfast granite hills
You are the strength that doubting stills

You are the keel that holds the course,
The guiding light, you are the force!

Terry Dawson
Providence And Wantoness

Amid the blowing winter grass,
Upon a gentle rise
A young man sits in khaki clad
With vision in his eyes.
He sees the rough and virgin land
Transforming in his mind,
He sees the untamed wilderness
Take on shape, defined.

By force of will and strength of mind
The land is caused to yield -
What once was but a wilderness
Is now sleek stock and field.
Harness now the bountiful earth;
The farmer plies his trade:
The earth is tilled and silos filled
by toil is progress made.

And year on year by toil and tear
Are more improvements made.
Paddocks fenced where fatstock graze,
Bank overdrafts are paid.
And in wide fields the golden leaf
Grows tall in the summer heat,
Along the path to the farm school
Tread little learners feet.

But now in power are greedy men
By scruple unconstrained,
Whoes lust for riches knows no bounds
Corruptly, much they've gained
And driven by their envious hearts,
Reap where they did not sowe;
Through years and years of unrestraint
They've sunk so very low!

Those who have no better trick
Than belittle, mock and jeer,
The lowest dregs of human kind
And vile beyond compare
Come menacing up the dry farm road
To do their filthy worst,
Brandishing their spears and axes
By God! This land is cursed.

And now that farm just lies in ruin,
The tragedy is vast:
The work by generations done, now
A shadow in the past.
And all of which he was justly proud
Is now a devils jest:
Beneath the sun has tyranny done
What tyranny does best!

Terry Dawson
Psalm 19 Retold

The wondrous lights of stary heaven
Proclaim your works O Lord.
The firey nomad of the skies
That sees and knowest all,
Causes the days and nights to pass
Also the spring and fall.

Everlasting and clear
Is the fear of the Lord,
Refreshing and perfect his laws.
To dull-witted fools
comes wisdom and light
Flowing surely from his tell.
As judge and commander
More worth He than jewels,
Showing the righteous path well.

Greatly enriched those
Who these things to posses
No less are they
Than nature's sweet
Fresh from the honeycomb pressed,
For he that resides in the light of the Lord
By so doing is greatly blessed
And by virtue are they self-reward.

From me my stealthy faults remove
That I may stand true in Your light,
Approve you too
Of my wandering thoughts
And spoken words also,
O Lord God my redeemer!

Terry Dawson
Questions Of A Certain Sort (There Is No Gain To Ask)

It's natures way that young men stand
As one against the foe
To guard the things they hold most dear
And reckless hazard life and limb
'Gainst they who bear them threat.

In time the conflict's course is run
The outcome as it may.
Great sorrow weighs on those bereaved
Who bear a awful load.
And presently they'll weigh in scales
Past hopes against the cost
And wonder if potential gains
Could justify the loss.

Questions of a certain sort
There is no gain to ask.
Reason's powers hold no sway
In blind fates senseless realm.
And tortured those that yet pursue
Answers which must elude
But peace of mind have those who know
The great earth's ancient way:
The toll levied upon the few
In general serves the whole.

Terry Dawson
Renewal

These flowers now have had their day
Like life's dreamings, they fade away
For every season has its need
As vibrant colour fades to seed.
And old life dreams its ancient dream:
The future beckons, the past has been.
Capsules of life, such tiny grains,
Lie under ground awaiting rains.

Terry Dawson
Silences

When mates are met in fellowship
And spoken words are few
And silence sits as comfortably
As a well worn in shoe.
And bound by cords of comradeship
When gathered three or two -
The sacred the stuff, those silences
Will keep old friendships new.

Terry Dawson
Solitude

Through the dark winters of loneliness
Dreaming - hearth-fire of the mind -
Is friend. And fellowships imagined
are the summers of Companionship
In our yearning.

Terry Dawson
The Butterfly

That
Erratic dancer on the wind, aloft
On chance-flapped wings;
Pauses now-and-then to sup from nectared cup,
By little sips but oft,
Knowing nothing of the joy it brings
To me; it buoys me up.

Terry Dawson
The Chagra's Slow Whistle

The Chagras slow whistle
Though faint and from afar
Vague memories yet called to mind
Whose detail, like a faded dream,
Is lost to the haze of time
And yet...
They conjure up a sweet melancholy
From an age which has now pressed,
And gone beyond recapture.

Terry Dawson
The Crocodile Basks

In Wild West America the bandits wore masks
But here in Zimbabwe the crocodile basks
And shows his face boldly as he goes about town
Yet he's looting the state of the jewels in its crown.

Terry Dawson
The Dancing Girl

In an erotic dream I see
A shapely girl dance close to me.
As sensuous slow music plays,
Her slender, lithesome body sways
Like lover lost in extacy,
Delightful in a thousand ways

Dancing with slow rhythmic motion,
Like one performing her devotions
In temple of the love goddess
By subtle move and bold caress
The dancing like the tidal ocean;
Phantasmagoric loveliness!

With seductive swing of full hips
She takes up wine glass and sips
Then with an imperious whirl
And toss of hair, that dancing girl
Blows breathless kiss from rose-red lips;
Hair a riot of raven curls!

The tempo of the music grows
The dancing girl she spins and throws
Her vestment off with artful flair...
But oh, what's this? - oh grim despair...
Awakening brings the dream to close;
The dancing girl becomes thin air!

Terry Dawson
The Elephants

Soft light by gradual stage reveals
(As dark of night recedes)
Idyllic scenes which yet conceal
Most grim and bloody deeds

Bushvelt is harsh land to its core
Where strong forever seek
According to the ancient lore
To profit from the weak.

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Alongside the herd two veteran bulls
Stands tall in morning light
And from their heads in glory full
Great tusks of gleaming white.

Experience guides them to the grove
Where buds of spring shoot yet.
There they banquet from the trove;
Which never they forget.

Tender shoots plucked from tallest trees
Of most exquisite taste
By agile trunks with greatest ease,
Steady and even paced.

Shadows shorten, the day’s heat grows;
The duo seek for rest
And from experience each beast knows
Beneath which tree shade is best

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In border lands of wilds conserved
Where life is really tough
Lives one with troubles undeserved
Whoes fate has dealt him rough.
A master he of the bushcraft arts
He cleans his ancient rifle.
His quarry, the elephants of these parts;
His self-set task's no trifle.

He checks the track for tell-tale sign,
Notes the bearing of the breeze,
Thinks through again his grim design
And frets on unpaid school fees.

Beneath a large and leafy tree,
In deep shade rest our duo.
Elsewhere the poacher sits, and he
Counts out his precious ammo.

Now from the dust and heat and haze
Oblique rays grant respite.
The drift begins as in bygone days
To water as mellows the light.

Direct the winding path proceeds
To the banks of the hippo'd pan
Where all may quaff their watery needs
To last full a one-day span.

At water biostrus games unfold
Cavorting giants unaware
Of the cost they may yet be tolled
For the ivory they bear.

Retiring now into the gathering dusk,
Loud report shatters calm
And covetous man's great want of tusk
Bring noble beast to harm.

Against speeding bullet, what defence
For loss of range, what plan?
Now let the time of shame commence
For greedy hearted man!
If by our hand this mighty Wild
Should vanish from the earth,
What could we tell the Future's child
And what would be our worth?

Terry Dawson
The Farmworker

The barn rooster declares at last,
The new day has begun.
The farmworker prepares himself
To start work with the sun.

The farmworker mops his brow,
Surveys the weed-filled row,
Stretches well his aching back
Then takes up once more his hoe.

The farmworker pauses now,
Lets rest his weary arm,
Then presently takes up again
The tending of the farm.

The day draws toward it's close,
The sun low in the west;
The farmworker's toil is done
And he has earned his rest.

But one thing all farmworkers know,
As sure as they are born:
That while the long, long day is done,
There's new day in the morn.

Terry Dawson
The Harbinger Of Dawn

The harbinger of dawn up high
Sings his sweet, liquid notes
As it grows light in eastern sky
At the new day's approach.
Those soothing sounds that calm a man
Bring balance as they should
And speak of nature's wondrous plan
To temper harm with good.

The farmer awakens from his dreams;
To that heuglin's dulcet sound
And follows yet his nocturnal themes
Where fields of plenty abound;
For who emerging from sleep's domain
To robin's matchless song
Could be downcast, much less refrain
From optimism strong?

Now nature knows the ancient ways,
Holism is her key
Should farmers heed them all their days
Then certain it would be
That fair part yields to each the earth
With jeopardy to none:
The globe spins on; life, death, rebirth
To each its piece of sun.

Terry Dawson
The Highlands

How sweet it is to take the path
That leads to Highland and to hearth
To leave behind the busy strife
Of the frenzied city life.

Where rolling hills in summer green
And timbered valleys in-between
Bring calm back to a fevered brain
And magic melts away the strain.

At evening hour the fire is lit,
In its warm glow the people sit
And in the coals the stew pans hot
Bubble beside the coffee pot.

Without the walls the cold winds stir
The leafy trees while insects whirr -
The nightjar calls shy and reserved;
The ladies tell that dinner is served.

The call of francolin marks the dawn
How fine the view when curtain's drawn.
Long bridal paths down which to stroll
And vastness to expand the soul.

And vistas to inspire awe
As waters in white ribbon pour
When Mtarazi's waterslunge
In long cascade in headlong plunge.

And some would scale Nyagani's heights
To marvel at the matchless sights
That thrill the heart and seize the eyes;
Great vistas beneath pellucid skies.

Now harken to the swish of line
As angler plies his craft to dine
And place his fly with skillful art
To tempt the trout to play it's part.

Now sinks the sun behind the hill
And arms goosebump at evening's chill
As folk retire to refuge warm;
Far thunder's call is coming storm...

From the high branch beside her nest
The lusty robbin bills her best
And still her happy singing fills
That garden nestled in the hills.

Terry Dawson
The Hunting Dog

The hunting dog
Is bent on hog
As freely flows saliva
And rapid paced
The frightened chased;
Will he be survivor?
With bloody claw
Is writ the lore:
Experience is advisor.

Terry Dawson
The Judas Coins

A blight is upon the promised lands
Where the elephant herds roam free
When the great one's child is snatched from the wild
And the natural laws are defiled!

Three tens of silver pockets he
Who takes the young ones from the free
To live alone until their end
No kith, no kin, nor any friend.

A curse upon the evil, Greed
To place in bondage never freed
The wild infants filled with fright
Without hopes to assuage their plight.

No herd or wild to make them whole
Or kindred ones to soothe the soul
Till sad death finds them still alone
Curse'd are the Judas coins; the hearts of stone!

Terry Dawson
Now in our time lives upright man,
Conscience his master stern,
Though in this land of tyranny
Brave men are apt to burn.
And while he is a simple man,
In moral strength he towers
And when to him a son was born,
They called his name Christpowers.

The father proud takes up his stand
Against the evil state
And dangers harsh must he endure
From the cruel men of hate.
The yoke of persecution falls
Upon his shoulders broad
But no onslaught will make him bend
Nor sheath his righteous sword.

Now those in league with wickedness
- Hyenas in the night -
Dark-hearted do their evil work
'Gainst those who stand for right.
And fire is their agency -
One match can reek great ruin.
They do not care, great strife they bring
To land disaster-strewn.

It was the night Christpowers was born
The first time evil struck.
Into black night the family fled
Trusting to God and luck.
On mountainside birth pains begin
And scant the light to show
From leaping flames where homestead burns
In valley far below.

Now in the wild winter veldt
This dark and moonless night,
The birth is not an easy one
Without the aid of sight.
It's not sure if new life will see
The coming up of sun.
In awful dark in hopefulness
They name him for God's Son.

But fate dealt kind, the child lives,
He prospers well in truth,
Though a blight falls on what should be
His carefree time of youth.
An awful and in-creeping fear
Preoccupies his mind:
Nine times have flames consumed his home;
Evil with dark combined!

Christpowers at the age of ten
Awakens cold with fright,
He's heard a thump land on the roof
The thatch is sure alight.
An acrid smoke engulfs the hut
In blindness children flee
But Christpowers is in distress
He can't in time get free...

This grim crime's author all men know
For red in claw and tooth
The heartless heads of this land are;
They cannot hide the truth.
With a white heat resentment burns
Yet fear quells rising tide,
But certain, soon, bank-bursting flood
Will sweep all filth aside!

Terry Dawson
The Milk Cows

The mombies bellow as the dawn draws near
And dust hangs low in the morning air.
And out to the east a franklin calls
As the workmen scrub the milking stalls.
And facing the dawn the milk cows await
As madhala opens the slide pole gate,
Then out of the kraal like beasts in a dream
Unbidden the milken ladies stream.
In the stable we hear the fall of blocks
When the cow's in place and the stanchion locks,
As the old girls with an eager zeal
Tuck into their repast of silage and meal.
To the rythemic click-clack of vacuum rails
The milk of the cows flows into the pales.
It's strained and it's chilled and it's stowed in churns
As the cows ruminate as the cud returns -
Into the mule cart, in soft morning light
The churns are hoisted and stowed away tight.
Down winding track the beasts and cart go
To the DMB in Bula-way-o.

Terry Dawson
The Pioneer Road

On his salted horse with his slouch hat rode
A transport rider on the pioneer road.
And the rider's none other than Jan Van der Stead
Whose old frame is topped with an excellent head
And his strong right arm on the endless trail
Is the strapping lad called Benjamin Hayle.
And schooled is old Jan, in the classroom of years
While Ben is a youth of adventure and dares.

It's the terrible year when the rinderpest struck
And they're down on their money but trust to their luck.
The transports and oxen that once were all theirs
Are now hocked to banks for the purchase of wares.

To the crack of the whip haul the sixteen spans
And the wagons roll on to the rider's plans.
And the oxen that toil beneath of the yoke
Are the few that withstood when the cattle plague broke.
So the kokeli leads forward from the driver's whip
As the convoy rolls onward to a hazardous dip -
It's the troublesome crossing of the Shashi's ford
Where natives are restless and there's trouble abroad
But Jan and his henchmen aren't new to the game
And strong are their hearts and steady their aim
But it curdles their blood when the rush is made
And the sunlight flashes on the assegais' blade
And the yells on the tongues of the heathen hoard
Are met by the volleys from the banks of the ford.
In the murderous storm of the hot leaden hail
The charge of the impis falter and fail.
And there in the still when the fighting is done
The wagons cross over by one and by one.

And the road rolls on through long dreary flat
Through the endless miles of the bushvelt mat.
Till amongst the tall hills where the weather is cooler
And they're clear of the lands of Lobengula,
Comes word by way of Ngundu halt
That the nation of Shona has joined the revolt
As the shifting of sands in the endless intrigue
Sees the foes of old times are now bonded in league.

Now the kraals of the Shona are perched on the heights
And the light of their fires betwinkle the nights
And precipitous slopes and near vertical fall
Are hazard to the men of the king when they call
To plunder fresh women and cattle and slaves
While the men and the old ones are fodder for graves.
Now the Shona will fight when the wall's at their back
But they've no appetite for offence or attack
And the creep and the pounce in the dark of night
Is preferred to the hazard of man to man fight.

Many are the troubles and great is the load
That are borne by the men who travel the road
Where attack by the natives or badlands one hears
Are the worries, they say, of all wagoneers
And prominent all on the road to ruin
Are horse fly and tsetse and mis-for-tune.

And weary the men as the sun dips low
But each in his heart knows there's further to go.
Now Ben gallops in with thunder and dust
And waving his hat and shouting to bust
That ahead a few miles and gathered in force
A fierce band of spearmen who stand in their course.
Now Jan looks about at the lay of the land
And finding it good, he circles his hand.
At once the drills of the laager commence
And the wagons draw around in age-old defence
And within them is built a boma of thorn
To hold the beasts safe through the night to the dawn.
With a cool and a calm that's devoid of pretence
Jan assigns to each man his arc of defence
And with resolute voice that steadies and calms
He recalls to his men of the strength of their arms!
The smoke from the fires gives the cattle unease
And drums from afar are borne in on the breeze.
Old Jan, his pipe lit, goes inspecting the lines
And harkens to the night for telltale signs.
Dispute of the dangers they pass safe to the dawn
As the clearance patrol find the foe is withdrawn.
And the cookboy called Cooky in lieu of his name
Is busy with coaxing the embers to flame.
From the lips of the crew, an ironical cheer
As aroma of coffee late comes on the air...

Through the trees of the bush like shadow and shade
Will-o-the-wisp sightings of Shona are made
And bands of the fighters in irresolute style
Keep watch on the wagons from over a mile.
Should ambushers lie low in the tall yellow grass
Of a trickier stretch of the Providence pass
Then the progress of commerce could be brought to a halt
As a high fence would stymie the unbridled colt.
Then onward and upward with scouts to the fore
The wagons roll on through the foothills once more.
And into the mouth of the narrow defile
Where some warriors close to under a mile.
Jan levels his rifle and steadies his aim
And off to the side Ben's doing the same.
The warriors sink down into cover of grass
And soon they are lost in the folds of the pass.
More spearmen appear on a ridge on the right
But a round in their midst has them scatter in fright.
The ascent of the pass bears many travails
By great heart and grit the transporter prevails
And the Shonas have squandered their single best chance
To plunder the convoy and halt its advance!
And Jan van Der Stead feels the thrill of relief
That the ascent of the pass, though fraught, had been brief
And he passed the hip flask of whisky about
Giving praises to God who had spared him a rout!
Now the miles melt away down the half formed track
As the wagons roll on with the wind at their back.
Some men at the wagons are shading their eyes
At the sight of far horsemen who are cresting a rise..
Then a cheer goes up at the glad sight seen
For the riders are surely the men of the queen!
The red faced sergeant says he's Ponsonby
And that he and his men are the BSAP
And they escort the wagons without further events
To the siege bloated town of mud huts and tents.
In the comfort and cool of a rough-thatched abode
They wash from their throats the dust of the road
And they toast health to each other and to that of the crown
In the busy saloon of Victoria's town!
All the talk is of witches who lead the revolt
And how to prevail and who was at fault;
Of murders at night and treacherous deeds
And narrow escapes and desperate needs;
Of tales of courage or terror filled flight
Through wild places and friendless at night,
But the question most begged of Jan and his crew
Is of the weapons and ammo that they had brought through!

From out of the wagons the merchandise pours
For farmers and miners or purveyors of cures.
There are boxes of bullets and rifles and more
And axes and shovels and picks by the score;
There are bales of cloth, hats, buttons and boots;
Fine dresses for ladies to prurient hoots
And tools for the working of wood and of steel
And rolls of hoop iron for mending a wheel.
There's liquor aplenty for joy or for woe;
All manner of seeds for a farmer to grow;
There's rice and there's flour, salt, pepper an spices
And knives, forks and spoons and kitchen devices...
From the very first moment the trading is brisk
And handsome rewarded is Jan for his risk!
When the day is near spent and low hangs the sun
The last of the trading and bargainin's done
And the paniers bulge for the money has flowed
And the wagons stand empty in want of new load
And Providence has repaid what it surely had owed
To the resolute rider of the pioneer road.

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Terry Dawson
The Plum In Springtime (Sixtieth Birthday)

The plum in spring returns to life,
In dazzling new white blossoms rife
Which pleasure well the heart and mind
And sense of calm there leave behind.

Contrast the winds of winter hurled,
Against the ramparts of my world!
For of my three score years and ten,
Three score will not come again

Now as the years in hand grow few,
I contemplate what best to do
And having pondered see it plain,
What better than press on the same.

Terry Dawson
The Poet

The poet edits
Now his poem
Mind on fire
Mouth afoam

Each amendment
A new toy
Shining, gleaming
Thing of joy.

Dashing, brilliant
Pure delight
Brightly shimmering
Glints of light

But in time
he comes to know
The shining
Was all false glow

The flashes
Of poetic art
To calmer mind
Seem not so smart!

Terry Dawson
The Poet Girl

Red hair aflame
The poet girl
With words wild, hot, untame
(Her locks in swirl)
Outpours her woes
Into unfeeling world.

On mountain high
Her would-be beau
Writes poems in reply.
He surely knows
Her joy is gone
Beneath low heavy sky.

From all she hides
Woes without ends.
To him she sad-confides:
She now depends
On solitude
Her leel and steadfast friend.

His mountains though
Are far from her;
Great distance is the foe.
He would prefer
To have her close -
Forward together go.

He'd bold recite
His love poems
To her each star-filled night.
His old mind roams
Down many roads -
Which one will bring her light?

Terry Dawson
The Sad Ballad Of Mopane Jack

Now the dancing games of the campfire's flames have mysterious effect it is true
On the stories told as the night grows cold under the vast cobalt blue
When voices drone low by the dull ember's glow, beneath the great southern cross
Then it's plain to tell that the stories go well when truth is gone to the loss!

And gathered anew an old soldiering crew and each treats the other as brother
For the comradely band can best understand the service of each as on other.
By the campfire's light on that balmy night, the talk is of times long back:
Asks Zambezi Bill, 'who remembers still the one called Mopane Jack?

'He was a man and a half who loved to laugh and his shoulders shook when he did
That thunder roll near out of control marked a happy man, but it hid
A steely heart that brooked no part for those who strayed from the right and such,
Yet inside he was sad that giant of a lad, for he was the one who cared too much.'

Then the moon sinks down below the leafy crown, as a fifth comes late to the fold
A spectre he, that none can see, to hear the old stories retold.
It's a ghost come back, for that fifth is Jack and he smiles at the yarns that he hears!
For he surely knows how a story grows on tongues that have tasted beers.

Now Bob stokes the flames and then exclaims, 'old Jack, he was one of a kind.
That old game ranger was a magnet for danger; a man by courage defined
One time on the spoor of forty gooks or more, it was way down Kanyemba way
Said the sarge 'what to do, they're many, we're few? ' Said Jack, let's make them pay!

'For three days more, they followed that spoor till at last it was no more seen:
A villager there, had taken. great care to drive cattle where the tracks had been.
Old Jack, he swore as he broke the the jaw of that one who'd thwarted his aim! '
Says Bill, 'it's clear, ' as he opens a beer, 'Mopane Jack knew the rules of the game! '

Dreams Jack:
It was no joke, it was my fist that broke
And should my time ever returny
A rifle butt not an upper cut
Would help that blighter to learn!

'One time on the road with a hell of a load on the back of his Series one,'
Says Jed with a shake of his head, 'and the spedo reading nearly a ton,
Streams of tracer fly by like green firefly and Jack gives a mighty roar.
With a deal of nerve and some crafty swerve he slams his foot to the floor!

'And there alone in the killing zone time drags by at a pace that's slow,
Though he strains his eyes to learn their disguise, he discerns not the place of his foe,
But now the road bends and then it descends; of a sudden he's in the clear,
With pistol unholstered, his courage is bolstered as he fires six shots in the air!' □

Dreams Jack:
I was nine tenths through before I even knew
that the buggers were shooting at me
I was nine miles high on the bobo gwaai
and my mind just buzzed like a bee.

Now the flames of the fire leap higher and higher as some wet logs pop and squeak
Says Jim in rough voice, Jack came once by choice with us to Mozambique.
It was an all night tramp to the gooks base camp hid in forest of thorn
Which we reached in time in extended line and we revved it come the dawn.

Now the fearful din as the sweep went in, that was a thing to behold
And to our surprise it was twice the size, that camp, as what we'd been told
But they had no pride, those ones inside and they fought with half a heart
And presently as all could see their defences fell apart.

The relentless advance gave scarcely a chance, the defenders their courage to find,
Then filled with dread, the most of them fled leaving their fallen behind,
And wise men one feels that took to their heels for terrible they were harried
This much is certain that withering curtain was death to those that tarried.

Then taking his ease in the shade of the trees Jack bursts into singing this song:
'Well what do you know, this day I've struck blow against that historical wrong!"
Of the landmine blast in that time long past that blew my old Landy to pieces
And though much delayed, at last they've paid... Their debt remaining decreases!

Dreams Jack:
That makes me laugh, but cut in half
That story just regaled
Though its true that I sung - with my dried out tongue
The sound effects totally failed.

'He spoke one time of an old gold mine', said Bob, 'and a fortune that he made
But later 'twas said that the seam went dead and after the bills were paid
Old Jack was broke and never more spoke of the time when he burrowed for gold
For he nearly went mad that his luck turned bad - at least that is what I was told.'

Jim took up the tale, 'the mine was for sale, poor Jack was in a trough of despair
And what do you think, he took to the drink and drank himself stupid all year.
His mining gear, was in poor repair and he hardly owned the boots that he wore
And his spirits were low that he'd nothing to show for his troubles and his heart was sore.'

Dreams Jack:
For me, never again that ball and chain
which for sure is a miners lot
For I love to roam in the wilds alone,
ten thousand square miles my plot!

'One R & R in the Shangani bar, his bottle of whiskey in place
'Howd'you do', says the girl, 'I'm Sue' and freckles highlighted her face
And in that while her happy smile was the light of the world to Jack
'By any chance are you free to dance', asks Jack, and never looks back.'

Dreams Jack:
So lovely and fair with her golen hair;
she saw some merit in me!
That leap, that prance that lucky chance
of fate changed my destiny!

'With his luck on a run that son-of-a-gun, that very same night found employ
With a hunting crew from a man he knew, and he gave a whoop for joy!
Now with his new wife and his wilderness life, Jack's happiness wanted for
naught.
In that wild domain he'd ever remain and he felt a thrill at the thought.

'Now the shot is high and the bull won't die; a buffalo shot through the lung
And as is the rule in this kind of duel, it's not over till one or other dies young.
And the traces of rud are a trail of blood as the beast flees clear out of view.
The follow-up started, precludes the faint-hearted and these who don't fear it are few!

'As though by lure the beast runs sure to a place where the bush grows thick
And the hunter knows that the honour goes in such place to the one who is quick.
Then so fast that it blurs, a disaster occurs; that bull kills Jack on the spot
For he is impaled as his rushed aim has failed to deliver a telling shot.

Dreams Jack:
And so was my colourful life set free from strife
as my essence flew free to the sky
All earthly pains I left on the plains
which now far below me lie.
And do not cry for now guardian I
Of that wilderness far below
As I elect to sure protect
The wild ones wherever they go.

With big voice tells Bill: 'his laughter echoes still all around these parts.
When clouds reach high in November sky as happily sing the larks
And thunder fills the valley and hills and in so doing declares
That life-giving rain is near again and so it will be all the years!

Now the dancing games of the campfire's flames have mysterious effect it is true
On the stories told as the night grows cold under the vast cobalt blue
When voices drone low by the dull ember's glow, beneath the great southern cross
Then it's plain to tell that the stories go well when truth is gone to the loss!

Terry Dawson
The Skeleton Coast

Across the Uhab river's dry bed
Lies a land unlike any other,
An arid plain beside the sea,
Of wild, mysterious beauty.
Land of majesty, wonder and awe
In pastels, seven colours of sand
That stir a man from within
To be his most and to strive ever for more.

And fog rolls in on chill, chill winds
From a cold, cold treacherous sea.
Beheld there incongruous things
Like ships, now skeletal wrecks,
Adrift on an ocean of sand
Mile upon mile from the shore.
White-bleached driftwood there
Castaways from far distant land.

And in the vastness of that wide space
Is thrust upon man his own tininess.
And there's a stillness and a silence
To calm a turbulent soul
And arranges things from within
That a tendency to violence,
Gives way to love of peace!

But stranger by far than all things,
In that strangest of wild, wild lands,
Is the companionship that is given
By desert solitude, to those that seek -
And the thus-comforted soul
Sings its songs in return
In that wilderness strange and unique.

Terry Dawson
The Spoilsport

The things we do! I dream of you, In dream my face is pressed
Up close and tight in time of night against your lovely breast
Amd warming glow commence to grow from that proximity
Then questing touch and such and such, oh joy these things should be
But now crowed call halts dream's hot thrall, the waking hour is here!
And rue the cost in pleasures lost, hark hear the spoilsport cheer!

Terry Dawson
Trees

With perfect certainty all know
The wondrous ways of trees that grow.

Their sacred forms against the sky
Inspire all who pass them by

While thirsting roots have stealthy-found
Their liquid banquet underground

And each has with perfection laid
Soft, leafy resting place in shade

Baring gnarled trunk with scarred, bowed bough
Yet glad-beheld by man somehow.

And gives each year abundant yield
By crafty methods well concealed.

The mighty tree like destiny
Bestows its gifts on you and me!

Terry Dawson
We Gardians

In a world where sale goes
To the highest bid
We face loss of wilderness
Almighty God forbid.

We guardians
Of this dry dust
Do what we do
Because we must -
And some beasts pay
The awful cost
That wild range
Is never lost

If any know a better way
To save the wild quarter
Prey tell... and gladly we
Call halt to further slaughter

Terry Dawson
When A Despot Dies

A din rose up in the land of the lost
As news fell on the ear
And great the clamour to accost
The one who now drew near
Out of the throats of the too-soon dead
A fearful banshee curled
For he, so long the face of dread
Has gained the spirit world

From mine shaft and from shallow grave
The angry dead arise
The armies of the ghostly brave
Swirl upward to the skies
And each avenging spirit bears
A toll it must extract
Each through the long and empty years
Has kept its vow intact

And to the rising gyre of din
With fearful halting tread
The new ghost frail and ghastly thin
Advanced with awful dread.
All saw the terror in his eye,
'Fear not', they say as one
And still with single voice they cry
'Your torment's just begun...'

Terry Dawson
When The Black Dog Comes Stalking

When the Black Dog comes stalking
And spirits are down-pressed,
To go barefoot walking
In the wilds what's best.

When joy's at an end
And spirits are low,
Then take you a friend
And wild-walking go.

Amid the great trees
A wild orchestra plays
Where a hurt mind it frees
Of all its dismays.

And there by calm feelings
Your life will be blessed
As by natures sure healings
Your spirit's caressed.

Know this my brave-heart
When you're in despairs:
In far mountain rampart,
There's a farmer who cares.

Terry Dawson
Where Did The Years All Go

Once more the fiery ball around
An old year out, a new one found
And on we spin in merry twist
Some chances gained and others missed..

How simple now the whole world seems
To callow youth with restless dreams.
No burdens yet the shoulders bear,
Not yet known the weight of care.

Against the world we pit our strength
And learn our measure breath and length
Unyielding earth bends to our will;
We love the power, we hunger still.

In prime of life we take control,
We set our course then onward roll
And in our sweep is borne along
Our kith and kin the weak the strong.

On-marching time rolls back the years.
We turn to grey through age or cares,
Then for our moment we are wise,
We soar on wings and rule the skies.

Now stooping man with silver hair
Hankers back to yesteryear,
Marveling where the time has gone;
Ready to pass the baton on..

Terry Dawson
Where Have All The Years Gone?

Where have the years all gone? A poem.

Once more the fiery ball around
An old year out, a new one found
And on we spin in merry twist
Some chances gained and others missed..

How simple now the whole world seems
To callow youth with restless dreams.
No burdens yet the shoulders bear,
Not yet known the weight of care.

With strength of arm and mind we bend
Unwilling world to meet our end.
By confidence is cleared the way,
Masters we at work and play.

In prime if life we take control,
We set our course then see us roll
And in our sweep is borne along
Our kith and kin, the weak the strong.

On-marching time rolls back the years.
We turn to grey through age or cares,
Then for our moment we are wise,
We soar on wings and rule the skies.

Now stooping man with silver hair
Hankers back to yesteryear,
Marveling where the time has gone;
Ready to pass the baton on..~td 2018

Terry Dawson
Whose Road?

The elephants speak:

The thought occurs
You creeping curs
That you are much confused.
We hefty grey
Have this to say
This wayfare is all used
Now pray turn back
You mangy pack
In case you are misused!

The dogs speak:

Look in our eyes
You over size
You'll see we're not afraid
Now You return
Or you will learn
The price that must be paid
For we have claws
And crushing jaws
Should error here be made!

The soul of the road speaks:

There are two tracks,
One goes, one backs
Solution is at hand
Creatures of heft
Pass on the left
Follow the line of sand
And on the right
In broad daylight
Will pass the painted band.
The heart of the wilderness speaks:

The face of pride
Should not abide
Beneath these hallowed skies
Who feigns to tall
Will surely fall;
Follow the way of Wise -
Who chooses dare
When it is clear
There's chance for compromise?

Terry Dawson
Wild Rememberings

I wander the wilds lost in thought
And scant heed to those wilds I paid
But presently my eye was caught
By elephants at rest in shade
Of albidas that dot the plain
Of that vast region, flat, untame.

Those giants in majestic state
Despite their might exude a calm -
My heart beats on at steady rate;
All to my soul a soothing balm.
By scent and sight they me discern
Yet they rest on in unconcern.

Motionless the behemoths stand
Like statues in the wilderness
And in my heart I understand
They are the more and I am less.
In wonderment I stare bewitched
Not knowing yet how I'm enriched

Now I am old - long years have past
And thinking back to that far time
I see the lesson well at last:
Oneness with wilds is near-divine
And he who would be person whole
Firstly must be enriched in soul.

Terry Dawson
Youth Who First Must Fight

The bell's last peel drifts on the air
That marks the close of old school year
As turns again times restless tide
And youth advance on future fair

But youthful dreams with fate collide
Which cramps prospects that once were wide;
Young hearts with onerous burden hung
To weigh hard choice and then decide.

A heavy load for those so young
Whoes adult life has just begun
To run for life or stand for war;
Dishonor or in maelstrom flung.

And though they may some qualms endure
They pass through that uncertain door
Perchance mindful of their repute
Yet in their righteous cause secure.

Now march and run and shout and shoot
For them the life of raw recruit
Until that hapless mob congeal
Into fine band of men in boots.

Never was made a finer steel
Forged in the cauldron of ordeal
From ore of such uncertain main,
Than from youth who fight for ideal.

Now into wild and harsh terrain
Enduring trials of life untame
And traffic in a brutal trade
In warfare's harsh, heartless domain.

Advance by moonlight sore afraid
As prelude to some daring raid
And mindful of the stealthy arts
That keep their purpose unbetrayed.
Each small sound and sight imparts
New lesson to their beating hearts
For tiny the clue is that declares
Where peril lurks with deadly darts

And on through all the weary years
Of losses, victories, joys and tears,
Whatever shifting fate bestows,
SoldierIng proofs against all wears.

Now circumstance brings war to close
And every soldier homeward goes,
Yet what of him combat-inured;
The one who only fighting knows?

The future is the least ensured
For they that never once demurred.
For them that risked all unsecured
Outbreak of peace is hard-endured!

Terry Dawson
Zimbabwe - The Winter Of '17

By highway's edge the beggar begs
And dreams of perhaps meal.
So thin and lost the beggar's dog
That loiters at his heal.

Hardhearted, cold the cops arrive
In their jackbooted feet -
The wretched pair forsake place:
Today they will not eat.

The populace their eyes cast down
Look only at their feet
For no man's eyes can meet his mate's
Through shame in his defeat.

How long think some until that time
When shame to anger turns
And men rise up in righteous rage
And all Zimbabwe burns.

Terry Dawson
Zimbabwe 2013

If you stop and listen closely
On a still and windless night
You'll hear the modern sounds
Of empty stomachs growling long,
Of Hopes without a road to go,
And Desperation's silent scream.
These are the sounds, alas to say,
Of Zimbabwe twenty thirteen.

Terry Dawson
Zimbabwe 2016

Our poverty now is absolute,
Rotting garbage lies about
And flies infest this land.
The last remaining coping plan is made,
Beyond it looms the void.
Our bloated leaders wine and dine and laugh
And flaunt their wealth and plot new plunder.
And we the ruled despair:
The options now to lay down and die... or rise.

Terry Dawson
Zimbabwe 2020

The rains don't come, suns set, suns rise.  
The godless land, the cloudless skies -  
The tragic farmers have no tears  
The four-weeks-wilting crops are theirs.

Brute force reigns, the wicked rule;  
The craven rich, the cunning cruel.  
A broken bodied, spirit-crushed,  
Sullen, angry nation hushed.

The kneaded dough, the rising hour  
A smouldering anger turns to power  
The risen young, the freedom songs  
Toyi-toying youth protesting wrongs.  
The streets are thronged, tempest parade -  
The tyrants fear the beast they've made! !

Terry Dawson