

deconstructing dad

i am a construction worker—
but not in the traditional sense, mind you.
mine is not a labor of bricks and mortar,
but rather of dreams and memories.
the great rebuilding that is now underway
was not commissioned by some
over-staffed government agency,
just the passing of my father two years ago—
or was it three?

and like with many construction projects,
an old structure has become obsolete
in some manner or another
and must be torn down, pushed aside
before a new foundation can be poured
and recently minted red beams lifted into place
and welded together.

that old structure is my father's world.

i am sitting on the floor of my father's office—
except that it really hasn't been his office
these last few years—
not since cancer crept into his lymph system
without a building permit,
initiated its own clandestine demolition,
and carted him away from our lives.
the worst thing about cancer is that
it never sticks around long enough
to clean up after itself.
no—it left me to deal with the punch list.

his last will and testament is my blue print.

part of this pre-packaged process we call life
is the inevitable deconstruction of our parents.
and what we cannot or will not disassemble,
time will do for us—thank you.
picking off our parents' brothers and sisters,
friends, neighbors, and business associates—

as if they were all withered fruit
hanging from trees in a dying orchard.
bit by bit, all that our parents held dear
soon vanishes from the face of this earth.

where do I begin?

since my father’s passing, i wake—
i work—i eat—i sleep.
i catch myself sometimes thinking
like my father is still alive, a phone call away,
or twenty minutes down the road.
i dream of the great GOD, the one capable
of dissolving the tens of thousands of light years
between my life and the firmament of heaven.
i find myself bandaged in memories selected
from contrary filing systems in my brain—
one drawer for the fantasy that he might come back,
another drawer for the reality that he won’t.

the truth is, more I think about my father,
the more details of him and his life float up
from my memory, seemingly without end.
and just as digging at a construction site
might uncover relics from some forgotten yesteryear,
i am now finding questions cemented to those details—
questions that can never be answered—
questions that i never thought to ask
while my father was still in this physical world.

i can hear my dad’s voice reminding me
that death is just another part of life.
he would not be pleased with my efforts
to keep him alive by my talk of him
or my incessant reflections about his life.

just before he passed, my dad was lamenting
about his predicament.
when he was done, he turned to me and said,
“but maybe it’s harder for those left behind.”

maybe, indeed.

april 28, 2008

phantom of the earth

i am a phantom of the earth,
no less than the spirits
that walk the world's paths
looking for a peace
that shall never be theirs

though my fingers may
find all they seek,
never shall my hands
do work which will
outlast my days

and though my tongue
may wag in the breeze,
never shall my words
be heard by those
in ages yet unborn

and if there is naught
with word and deed,
then my thoughts
are all i have
on the face of this green earth

january 07, 1979

the memory of GOD

i once watched a documentary
filled with images of silent divers
being greeted by schools of welcoming fish.
the seas were blue and green
and shafts of sunlight
from an unseen sun above
penetrated down, dancing
to the beat of childish waves.

all of these spirits
came to greet me
and returned to me
the meaning of life
the memory of GOD.

i am surrounded by the warmth
of tropical waters, their salt
the stars of cosmic oceans.
the camouflage that covered me
during my earthly days
now lifted by an unseen GOD above
penetrating all around, dancing
to the melodies of mournful prayers.

all of my life my spirit
cried out for this water
begging that GOD grant me
the meaning of life
the memory of His love.

september 01, 1995

silent sneer

low, low moon sitting on the horizon
large and round and white as snow,
peering at me with frigid eyes
through the swaying and naked trees,
like a child playing hide and seek.

slowly, it begins to rise
sending down its ivory rays
surrounding me with soundless specters.
stern faced all the while,
its jagged lips never smile.

and as the sweet light of morn
robs poor luna of its brilliant polish,
i detect a silent sneer.
for it will forever go on setting
behind the mountains in the west—

while i am lowered into my grave,
never to rise above my gray, gray tombstone.

december 02, 1976

molecules

the molecules in the room
have changed,
one soul the catalyst.

new façades have come
to my mindstreets,
the old ones are withering away.

the dimensions of the room
have shifted,
one life the measure.

new horizons have come
to my mindscape,
the old ones are fading away.

the colours in the room
have dimmed,
one day the artist.

new flames have come
to my mindscreams,
the old ones are echoing away.

the mirror in the room
has changed,
one soul the catalyst.

april 01, 2007

playgrounds

there is a playground
somewhere out at sea
 only the sprites know
 behind which school
no titter totters—
just waves and songs
 of distant whales
 to fill the recesses of my heart

there is a playground
somewhere in the sky
 only the clouds know
 over which horizon
no swing sets—
just wind and songs
 of distant gulls
 to fill the recesses of my mind

there is a playground
somewhere amongst the stars
 only our spirits know
 beyond which gate
no merry-go-rounds—
just light and songs
 of distant angels
 to fill the recesses of our souls

february 12, 2007

little tornados

we are like little tornados.
we drop down from the clouds
find the earth with our toes,
wander about without knowing where—
our paths dispense their destruction
without meaning to hurt
what we touch.
and when we are done,
we are sucked back up
into the heavens—
what becomes of us?

there will be other tornadoes
on other days
but they will not be us.

july 26, 2004
(at the bodhitree house)