



Caught
in the Quiet



Rod
McKuen



<http://www.mckuen.com>



Books by Rod McKuen

Poetry

And Autumn Came
Stanyan Street & Other Sorrows
Listen To The Warm
Lonesome Cities
In Someone's Shadow
Caught In The Quiet
Fields of Wonder
And To Each Season
Come To Me In Silence
Moment to Moment
Celebrations Of The Heart
Beyond The Boardwalk
The Sea Around Me
Coming Close to the Earth
We Touch The Sky
The Power Bright & Shining
The Beautiful Strangers
The Sound Of Solitude
Suspension Bridge
Valentines
Intervals
A Safe Place To Land (1999)

Collected Poems

Twelve Years of Christmas
A Man Alone
With Love
The Carols of Christmas
Seasons In The Sun
Alone
The Rod McKuen Omnibus
Hand in Hand
Love's Been Good To Me
Looking for a Friend
Too Many Midnight's
Watch for the Wind



Music by Rod McKuen

Prose

Finding My Father
An Outstretched Hand

Et Cetera

A Book of Days
A Book of Days, 2
Another Beautiful Day
Another Beautiful Day, 2

Music Collections

New Carols for Christmas
The McKuen/Sinatra Songbook
New Ballads
At Carnegie Hall
28 Greatest Hits
23 Songs
Through European Windows
The Songs of Rod McKuen, 1
The Songs of Rod McKuen, 2
The McKuen/Brel Songbook
17 Rod McKuen Songs
The World of Rod McKuen

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For Piano & Orchestra
For Cello & Orchestra
For Guitar & Orchestra
2 for Piano & Orchestra
For Ondes Martinot & Orchestra (Balloon Concerto)
For Four Harpsichords
Seascapes for Piano
The Woodwinds

Symphonies, Symphonic Suites, etc.

Symphony No. 1
Symphony No. 2
Ballad of Distances
The City
3 Suites for Piano & Strings
Adagio for Harp & Strings
Rigadoon for Orchestra
Pastures Green/Pavements Gray
Symphony No. 4

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Of Walt Whitman
I Hear America Singing
The Body Electric 1
The Body Electric, 2

Opera

The Black Eagle

Chamber

Piano Trios
Piano Quartets
Sonata for Ondes Martinot

Ballet

Americana RFD
Point/Counterpoint
Elizabethan Dances
The Minotaur (Man to Himself)
Volga Song
Full Circle
The Plains of my Country
The Man Who Tracked the Stars
Birch Trees
Liberty
Seven Cynical Songs
Dance Your Ass Off

Music for Film & Television

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie
A Boy Named Charlie Brown
Joanna
The Unknown War
Scandalous John
The Borrowers
Lisa Bright & Dark
Emily
Travels With Charley
The Beach
Imaginary Landscapes

Rod McKuen

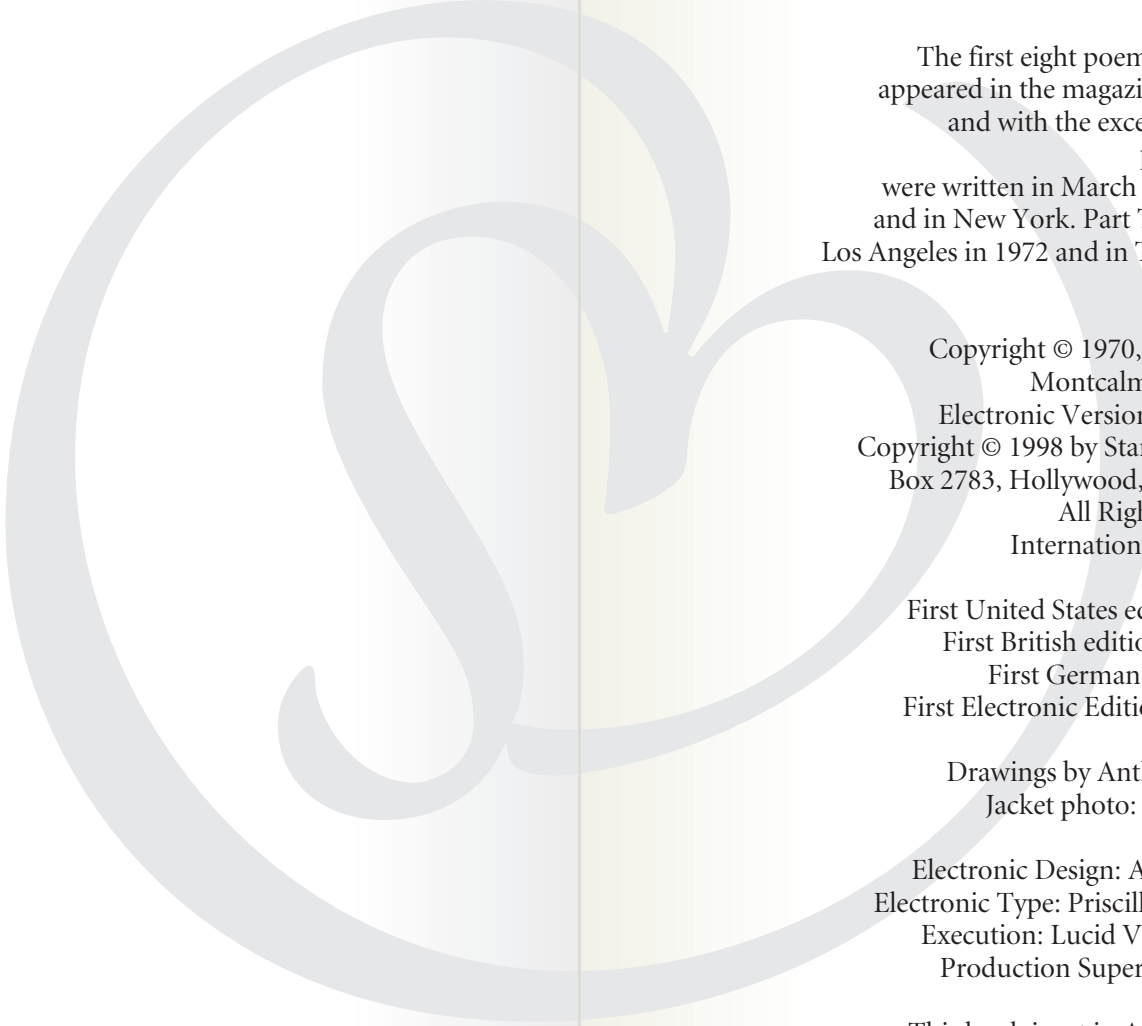


CAUGHT IN THE QUIET

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IV



The first eight poems in this collection appeared in the magazine, *Woman's Day*, and with the exception of two other poems in Part One were written in March of 1970 in London and in New York. Part Two was written in Los Angeles in 1972 and in Tres Vidas, Mexico in January 1973.

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CAUGHT IN THE QUIET



Introduction

In love or out of love we are suspended as in a limbo created by the presence of or the lack of someone else.

-RM, March 1970



As always, when we love, we forget how many limbo's there are yet to come.

-RM, February 1973



Someone else is here, and limbo might as well be mambo or mumbo jumbo.

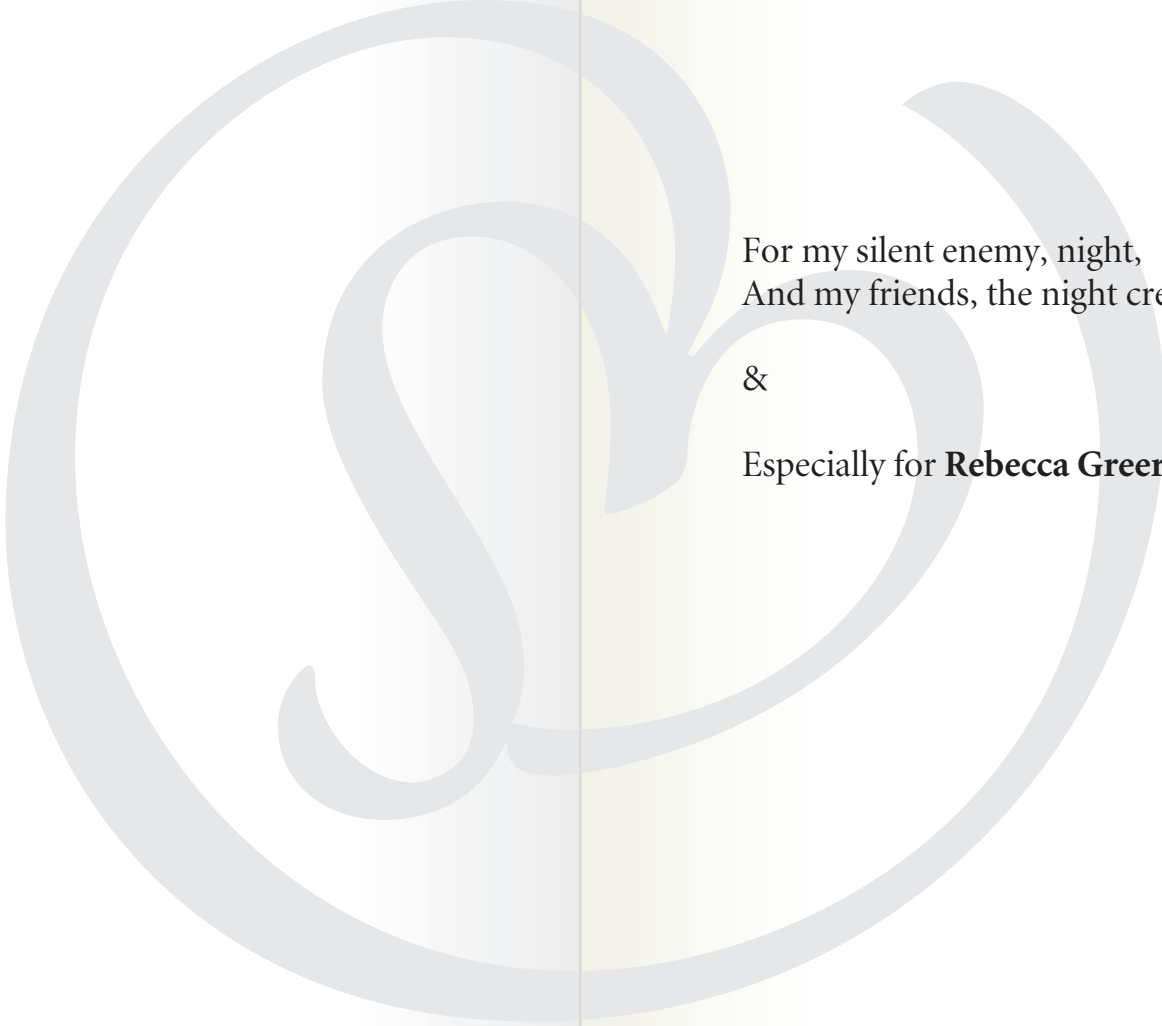
-RM, November 1998



This downloadable edition of Caught In The Quiet is just a way of saying thanks to fans and friends throughout the years who have stuck by me and cared about my work. It is offered with affection from all of us at Stanyan and especially from the people who help to make A Safe Place To Land just that.

Love,

Rod



For my silent enemy, night,
And my friends, the night creatures.

&

Especially for **Rebecca Greer**



part one

“coming together
staying apart
lost in diversions
dancing starts,
caught in the quiet
off on our own
coming together
staying alone . . .”
From “I’m not Afraid”

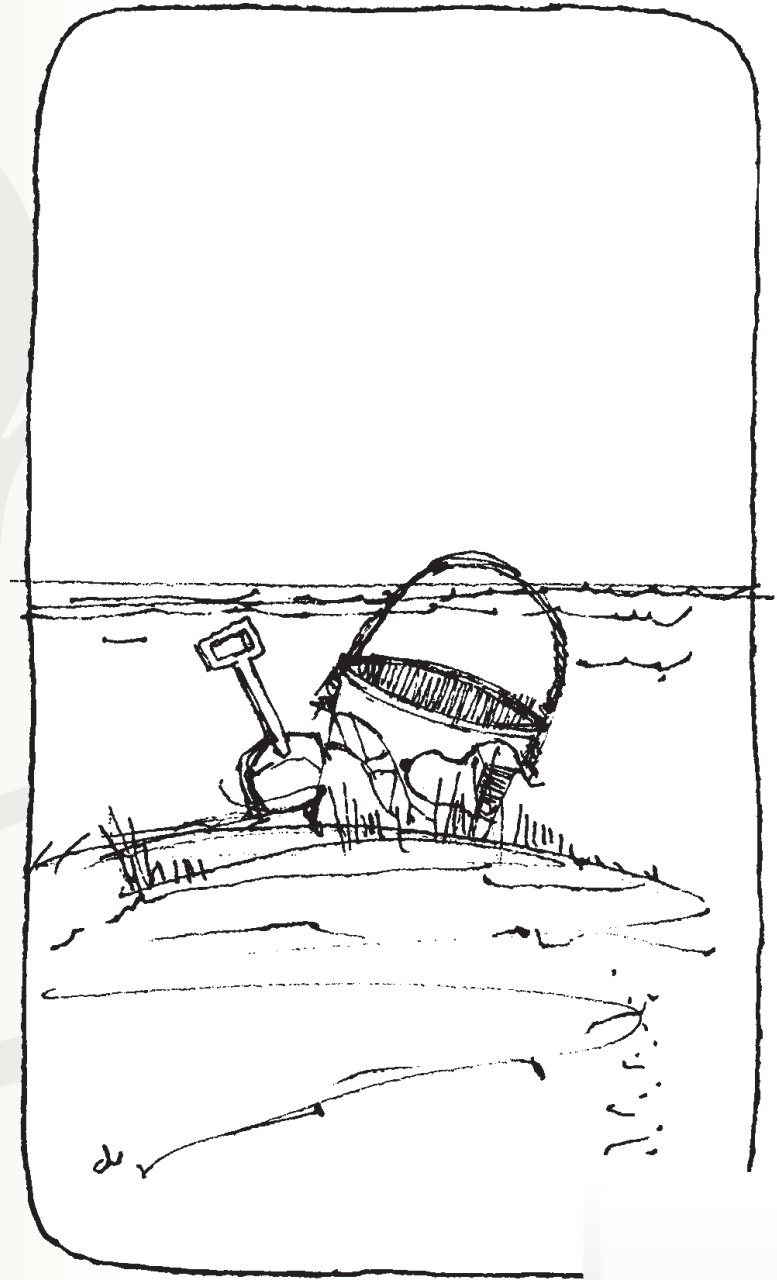


one

Not by the sun's arithmetic
or my own
can I make the days
go fast enough.
Yet there are those
who beg God daily
for an extra hour.
I wish for them no solitude,
no time apart from what they love,
and let them have their extra hour.

two

In becoming part of someone else
you lose yourself
and
that's the very least that happens.
Lucky are the ones who gain a language
or stumble on a system not yet tried
while they're giving up
what little independence
there is left in life.



three

What I've gained
from being with you
(besides a belly
and a deeper beard),
I couldn't say -
but any need for knowing
anyone but you
is what I've lost.

four

Out of the sad mistaken belief
that as a man I must behave
as all men do.
I've turned my back
a time too often.
God,
help me keep
a resolution that I make today:
not to walk head high
even one more time
past someone I can help.

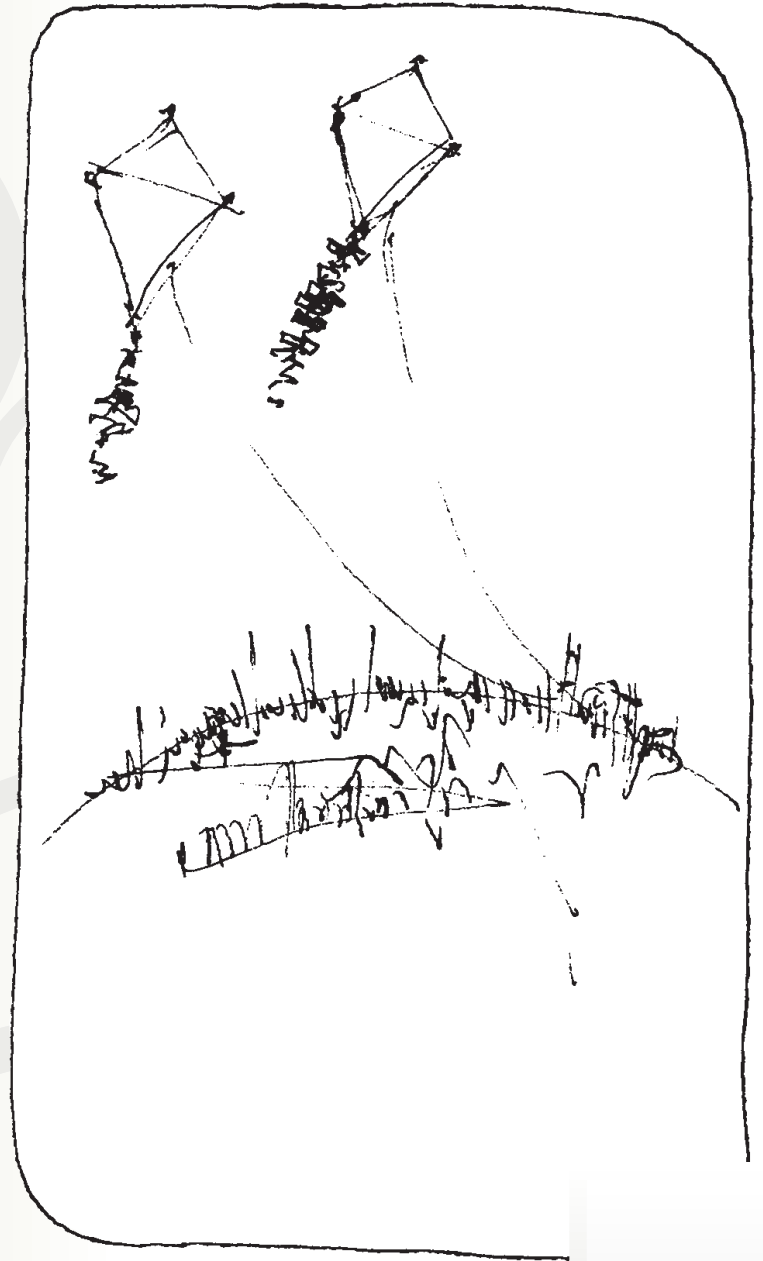
five

Every time we say hello
to some new encounter
we're on our way
toward goodbye.
Some distance
from the actual phrase
but moving toward it all the same.
The distance between those two words
becomes a little less
as we grow older.

Be aware then
that tomorrow
is only tomorrow.
There is nothing to fear
except the coming of another day.
But two against a winter morning
are sure to claim one more victory
over chance and trouble.
If I seek your eyes
I'll do so with my own eyes only.

six

Perhaps I'm not too far away
from the time when people see
the way I look at them
for what it means.
Not want, but need.
How much safer to want:
women don't expect
so much from you then.



seven

There are some wars
a man should never be afraid to lose.
One is the loss that comes from loving
whether in the lightning
or in the dark.

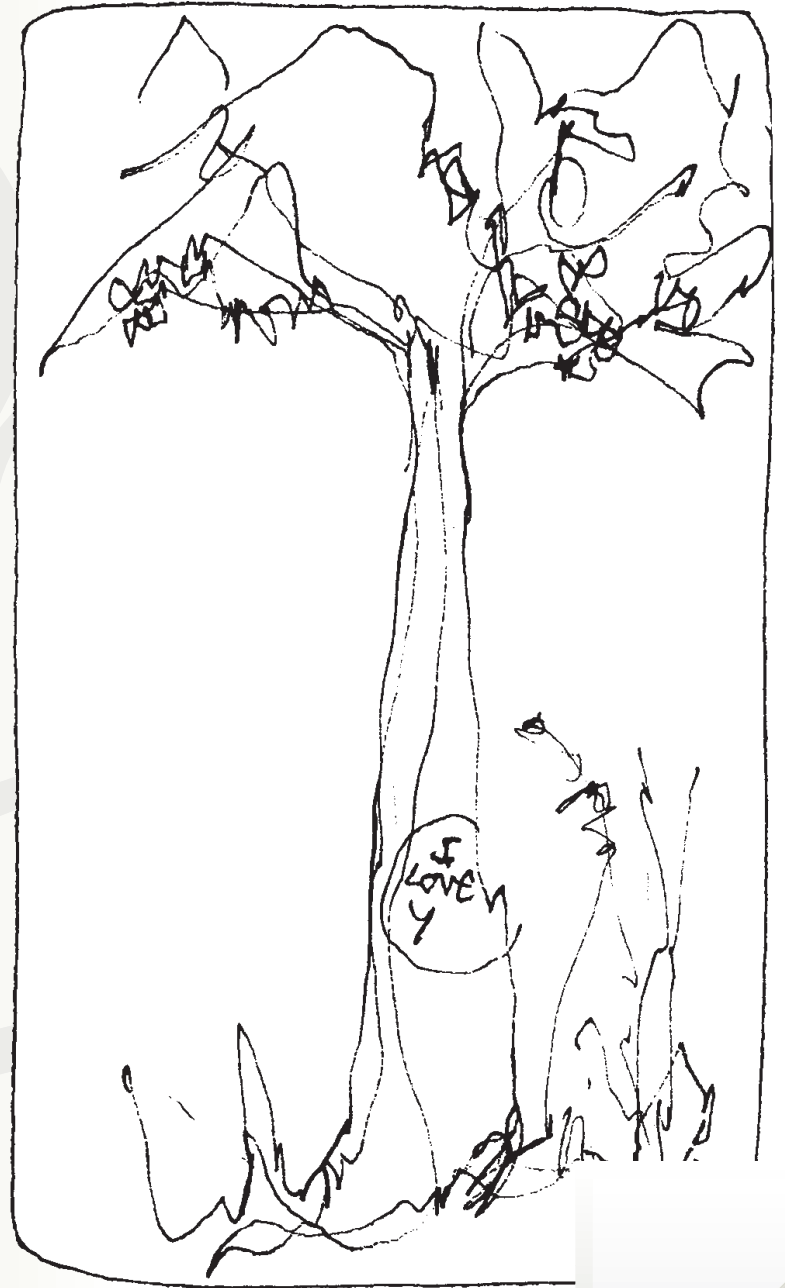
eight

Love,
being the right hand of God,
should be dealt with courteously.
And fireworks that fizzle in July
should not be held accountable in August.
I will not scold you
just because you changed your mind,
though I'll admit a jealousy of curtains
that just now separate your face from mine.

nine

The lifetime I have left
I open up to you
to tread upon
and travel through.

You pave the road
I'll follow,
you build the bridge
I'll test it first.



ten

My dog likes oranges
but he'll eat apples too.
Like me,
he goes where the smiles go
and I'd as soon lie down
with sleeping bears
as track the does by moonlight.

Don't trouble me
with your conventions,
mine would bore you too.

Straight lines are sometimes
difficult to walk
and good for little more
than proof of our sobriety
on public highways.

I've never heard
the singing of the loon
but I'm told he sings
as pretty as the nightingale.

My dog likes oranges
but he'll eat apples too.

eleven

You said
I'll always be there
and you are.

Sometimes
the distance
that you keep
is as difficult
for me to bear
as proximity would be
to anyone I didn't care for.

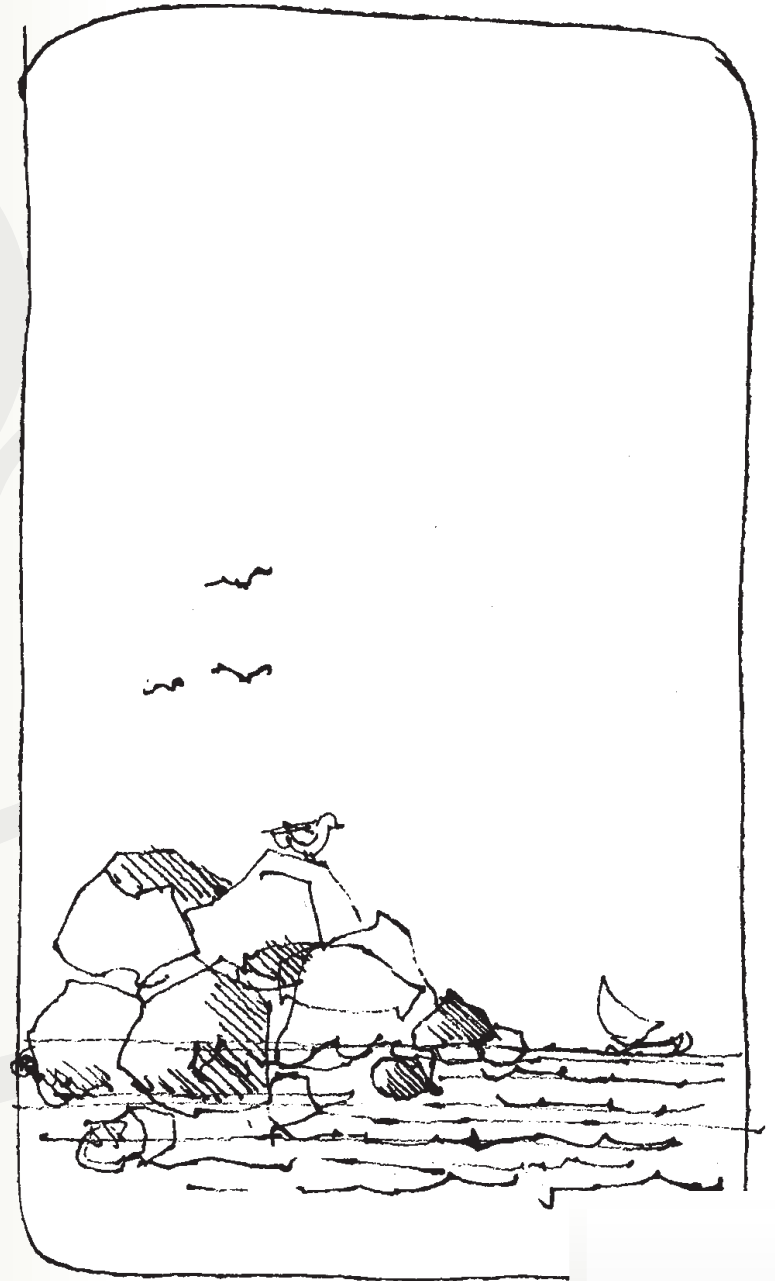
twelve

Trust me
and I'll do
good things for you
even if to make you happy
means to leave you
to yourself.

thirteen

I promised I would call
I used to do that often
and meant it at the time
as I meant to answer letters
and take the dogs out walking
the same hour every day.

I didn't call because I didn't
and because a promise
I might keep
that leads you nowhere
would be unkind
than those good intentions
that grow dim.



fourteen

You love me
with your patience.
How hard you work
and how you try.

I give back as my share
(in this contract not yet made)
just myself
That seems so little.

fifteen

If you like apples
then I'll carry home an orchard.
If sky is to your liking,
I'll bundle up the skies of summer
so you'll never need to know
the winter evening anymore.

I like the fire
and so I wait for winter nights.
Apples I can take or leave . . .

Your body like your mind
has need of going over
and I intend to be
a journeyman of your soft skin
for years to come.
Do not count the years
but know they'll be there
as sure as there'll be
winter fire and apples only
for those who make
their own restrictions.

sixteen

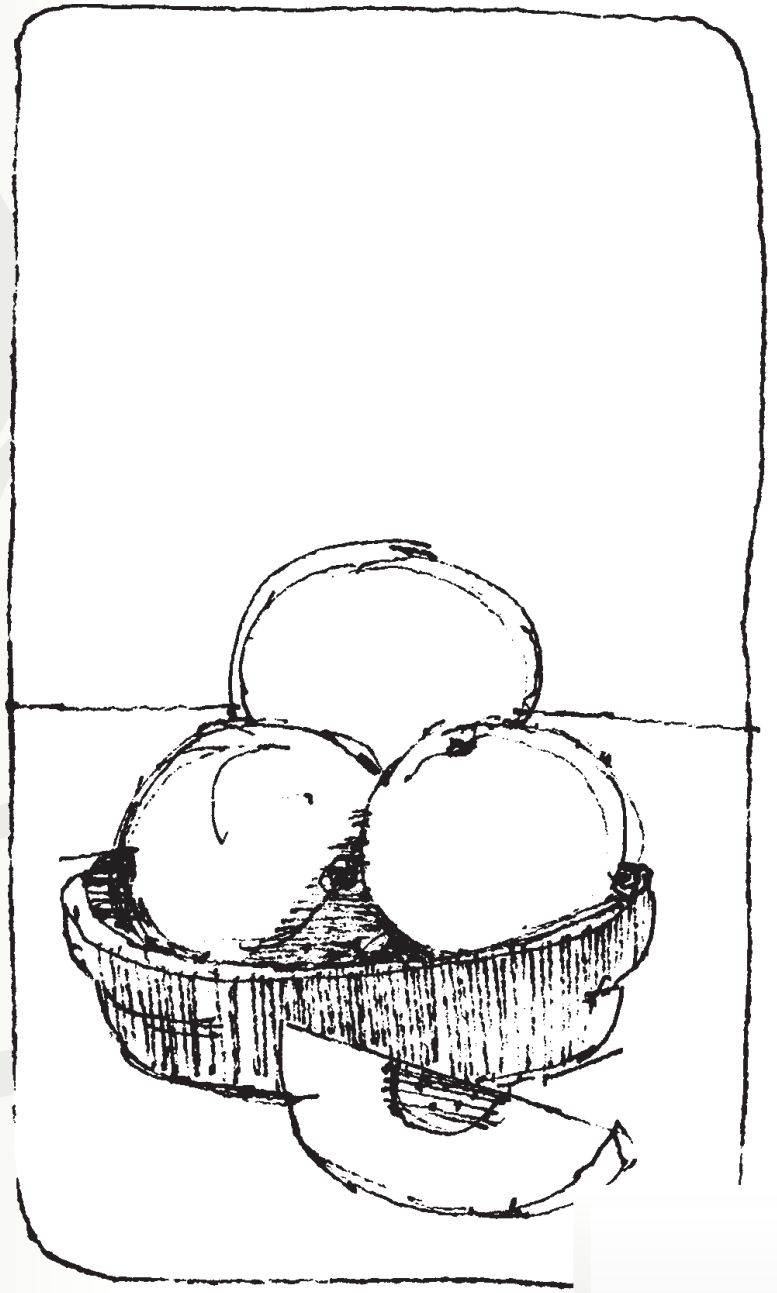
My sister had three dolls,
Imagine, Diane and Vera.
One day I operated on them
and removed their cry boxes.
Now they don't cry anymore.

But people really cry;
a good thing to remember
in taking love in stride,
in taking love at all.

seventeen

Often I wonder
why we go on running.
There are
so few things pretty
left in life to see.

That is until tomorrow
when the crocus jumps up
back in California courtyards,
and you become
my back rest
and my English bible.



eighteen

The moonrise
and the sunfall
are visible
to any blind man
with eyes enough
to feel the outline
of another blind man's breath.

nineteen

I accept the fact
that love is love,
though I understand it
not at all.

I understand
your belly though
and tulips in a jar
and only that
I'd make of you
exactly what you are.

twenty

I mustn't crowd you
I know that
your laugh on Christmas eve
should be enough -
though we both know it isn't.

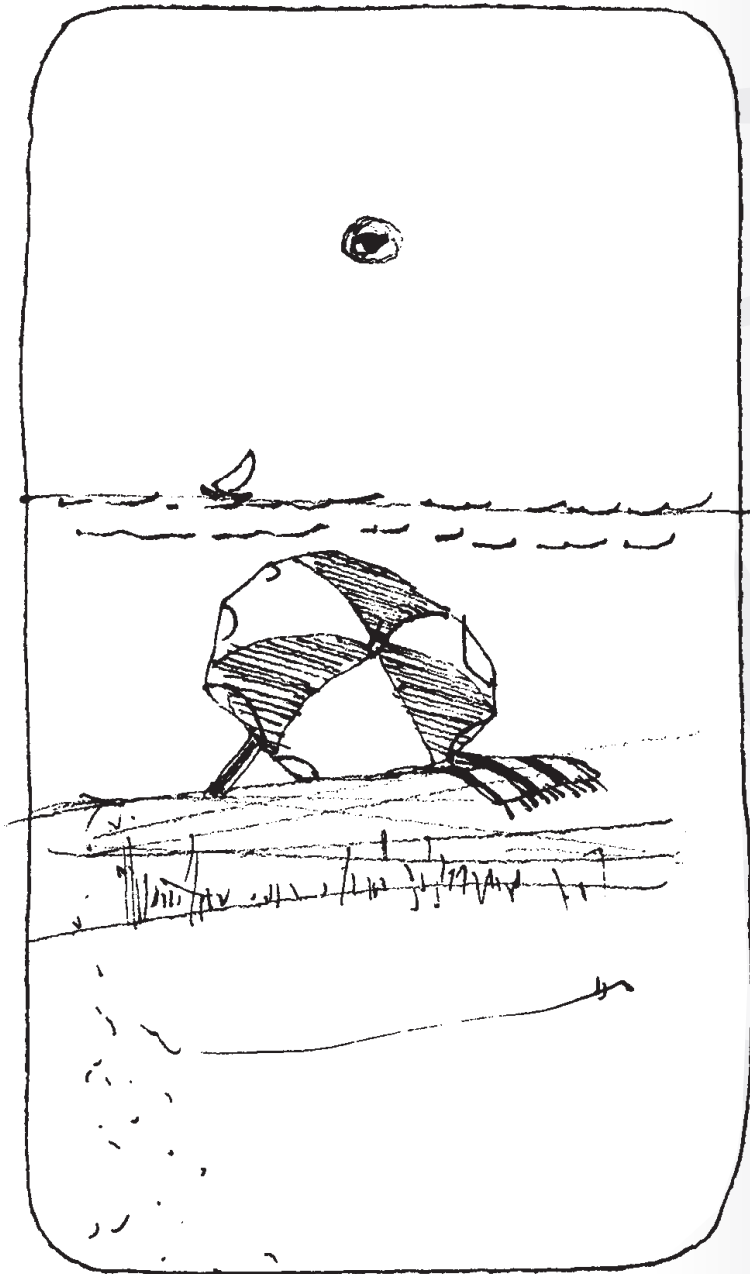
I try to look the other way
when you walk in a room
but, Jesus, was there ever
such a magnet as your face?

Compulsions
stronger than the will of God
make me want to kill your smile
before another man can see it.

twenty-one

There were no seagulls here today
warm winds have blown them
off to warmer sands.
To Spain or Greece where there are rocks
and all the caves are plentiful
with clams.

Lying by the sea I watch the giogoli
track the ladies down the beach
thinking all the while
of Muir Woods redwood trees.
Green fields and sheep dogs,
red poppies seen from train windows.



You wouldn't like the beach today
the flags are all so tattered
the kites are all too few.

You'd be like me
wondering how I came to be here
not troubled but not happy.

God I hate this waste of time.
I should be chopping wood
or raking leaves
or home in bed
with all those tired dreams
I saved so carefully
for such days as these.

I could count the ceiling cracks
and feed the animals
their Crackerjacks.

Though I feel spent
let down and done,
trying to slow down is not so easy
when your thoughts still
hang on yesterday.

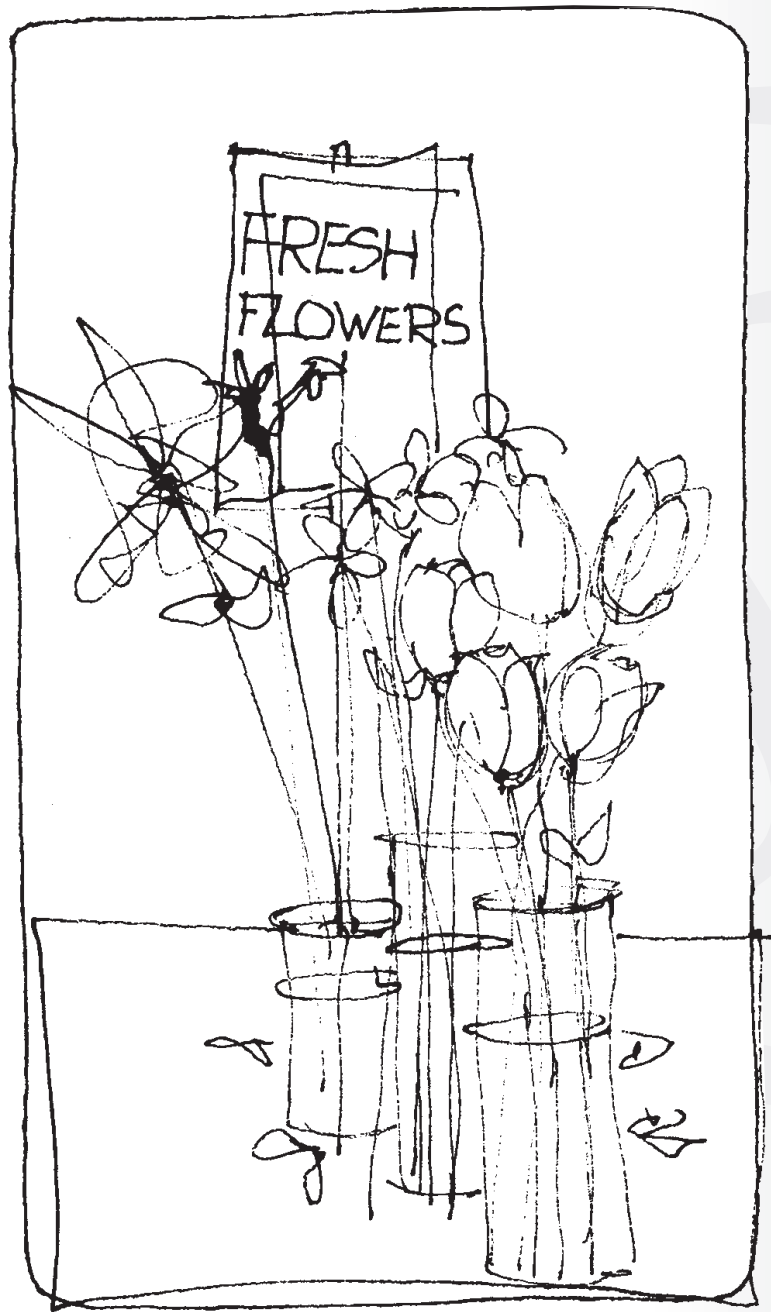
Dodging pigeons in the square
while five-piece combos
grate my ears,
I'm restless all day long.

Apart I am
and much alone.

Did you feel the same
while riding home to California?
What were your thoughts and
secret wishes?

I'll tell you this -
you've earned the right to rest awhile
and occupy your time
with just the breakfast dishes.

I know what's happening to us
and I know why.
Outside myself I stand
looking back in abject amazement.



twenty-two

Loving
is the only sure road
out of darkness,
the only serum known
that cures self-centredness
or puts it there.

I have said I love your body
as I love my own
I mean not just the contours
and the weight that shifts to me
but that I would protect you
from the robber baron
as I would protect myself.

twenty-three

I am
and I am not
a kind man
when it comes to loving.

Help me up
if I fall down
and prop my head
against the sink
if need be.

I am sick of sunshine
when you lie in bed
beside me.
But when you venture
through the door
I need the daylight desperately.

twenty-four

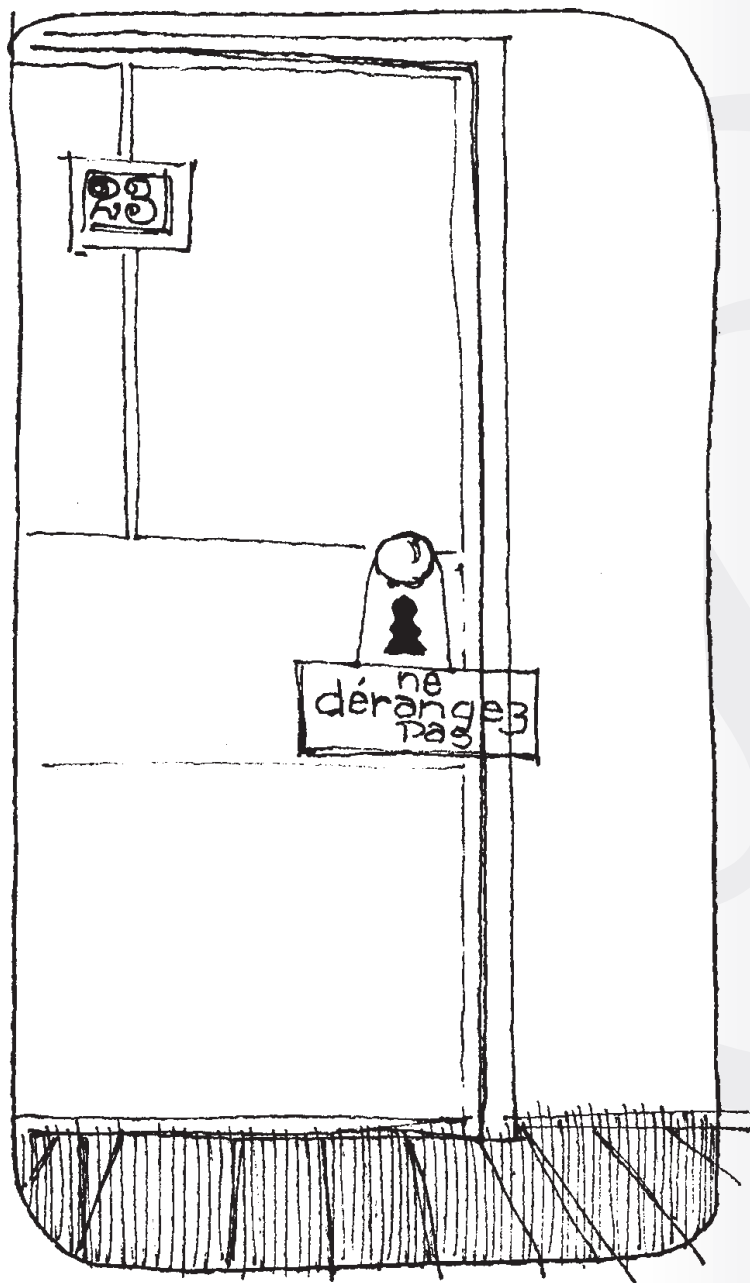
I know
I'm coming to the coda
as I know all waltzes stop.

If we stay at distance
five years more is all I need
If you hold me
fifteen minutes should be plenty.

twenty-five

There are no tangibles
but how you taste
and I've near forgotten that.

The only valuable I own
is a victory over alcohol
while putting you to bed
one early morning.



twenty-six

In loving you
I've held back no reserve
and so I've nothing left
to give tomorrow's lover
when you go.

twenty-seven

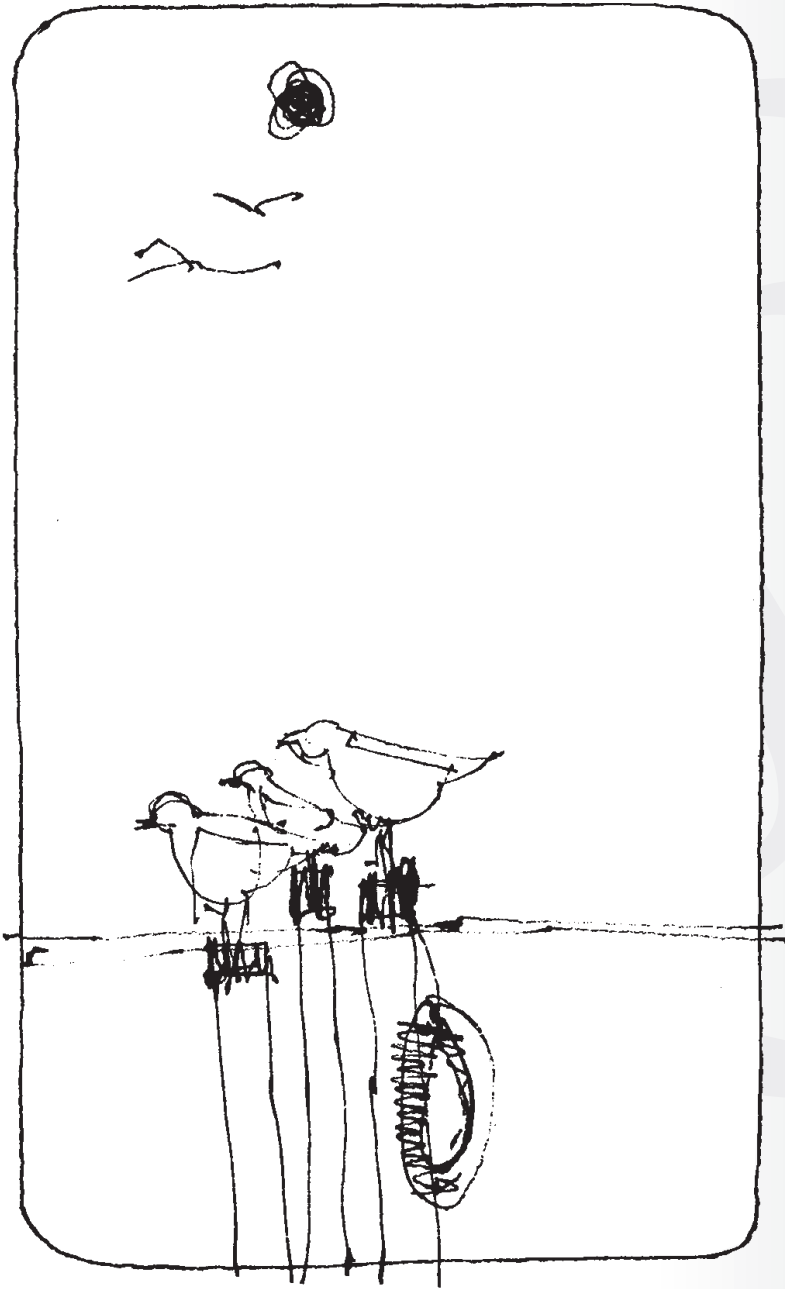
And now
I lay me down to sleep
and not alone.

Dear God
I do believe in you
how else could such a thing
come true for me?

twenty-eight

I do not ask your counsel
merely the covenant
of your arms,
even silence from you
if you're still with me.

It's the silence by myself
that doesn't heal the wounds.



twenty-nine

The spring has seen us both
side by side and singing
Did you think I'd dare
to leave you walking lonesome
into someone else's summer?

If it's someone else you need
I'll take you to him
and find my way
back home alone.
But I'll not have you
going aimlessly away
whatever be you liking.

thirty

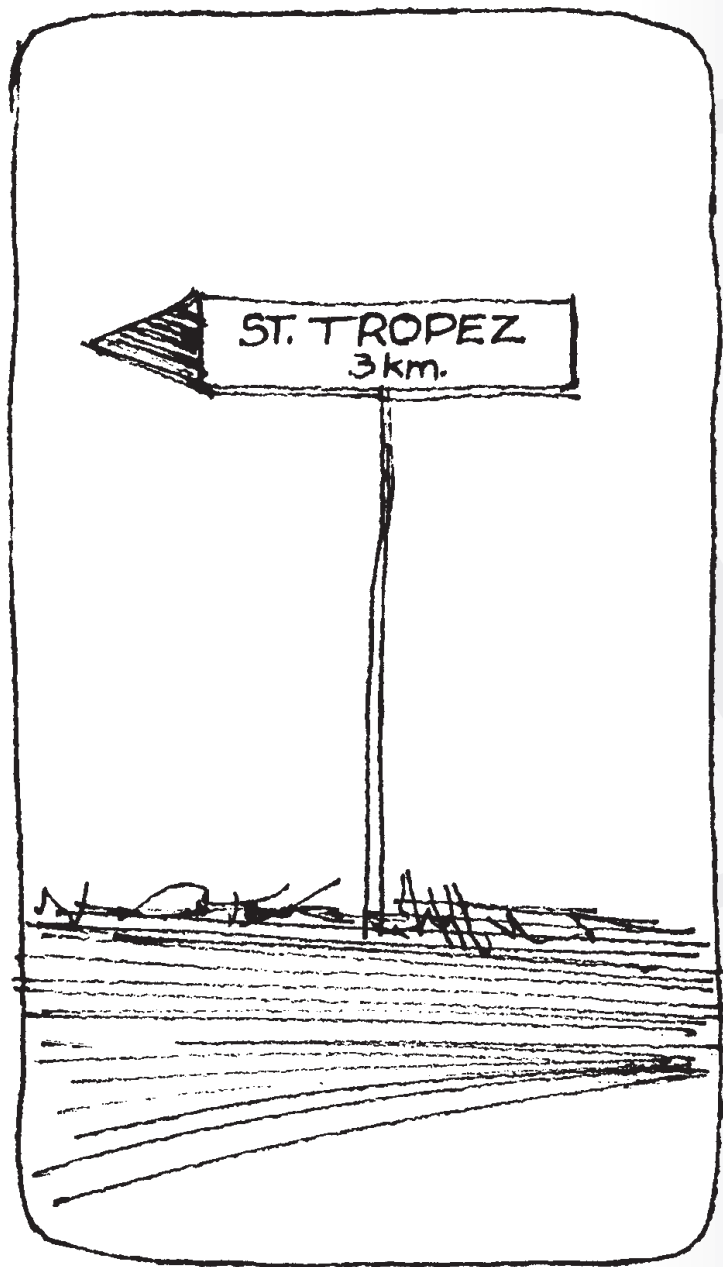
So close upon a narrow bed
that we are indivisible
I blot out everything
but your brown eyes.

And with the safety valve
of you at home
I last a single hour
in the marketplace.

thirty-one

Given the choice
getting inside somebody
even with a smile
makes more sense than always
looking through the glass
at someone else's candy.

A sweet tooth
doesn't always need
the richest cake.
Sometimes cookies
and a glass of milk will do.



thirty-two

Smiles
are passports
through the desert
and visas to
all alien countries.

I am your family
and your winter fire
let me do your crying
and you can make
my smiles for me.

thirty-three

Bare-bellied
in the bedroom
or coming from the bath
you look like every invitation
to every party I dreamed of
that never came.

I salute the sensibility
of your stomach
and pledge allegiance to it
as my only flag.

I know
that I'm preoccupied
with backs and bellies,
I'm told that all the time -
but God's face and Syracuse
are too far out of reach
to be of any use at all.

thirty-four

Man may love
his fellow man now
and roses too,
mini minds in maxi skirts
and all things green.

The liberation
has come so far
that I can show
my love for you
without your laughter
as a rude reply.

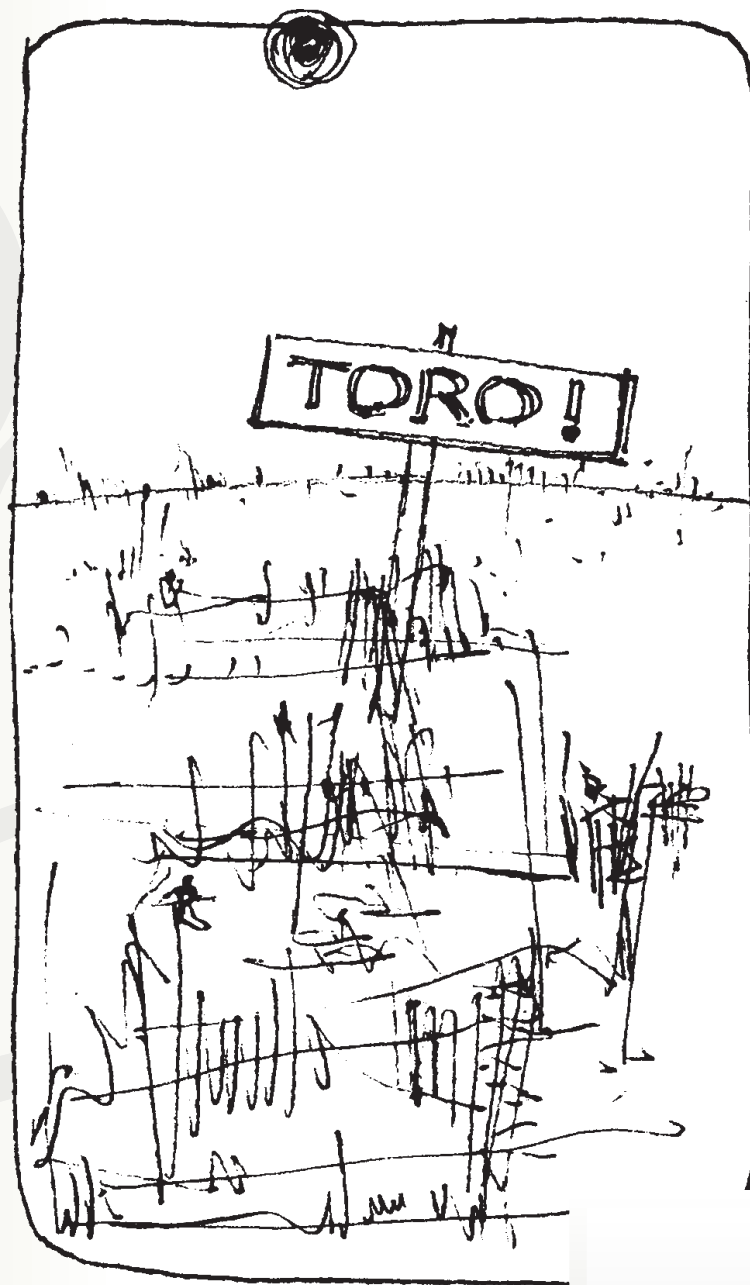
People in the streets must know
for when we pass
the passageways are clear.

thirty-five

I am to love you
I'm sure of that
this month of March.
Could I go back before November
and take a different road
I might.

But I'd have missed
your face against my own
that first December night
and turning on by turning
to look back at you
every time I went away.

Then coming
up the hill again
to face you head on
as you buzzed me through
your Spanish doorway.



thirty-six

Saturday
keep secrets
that Sunday
never could.

I came
to love you.
I wonder
if you knew
or know.

I wonder
if you looked on me
so gently
just because
you knew
looks were all
I'd get from you
all that you
could give

Stringing me along
isn't what you're guilty of
not stringing me along
might cause
your citizen's arrest.

thirty-seven

You may puzzle at me
when I tell you
that your not loving me
is the most love
that I've ever had.

But anyone who's
given in to loving
will know and understand.





part two

“all of us, both of us
each of us know
quiet’s less constant
than yesterday’s snow.
still we keep trying
and we always will
to take quiet home with us
up every hill.”
From “Up Every Hill”



afterthought one

Now the memory blurs.
You didn't feed it.
Not to worry,
not to worry.
I'll keep filling in
the holes until they're whole.



thirty-eight

My sights
were fixed upon you
for so long
that I have trouble
focusing on anything
not within your frame.

Not my frame of reference
but your frame.

I'm better now
but not completely
well or healed.

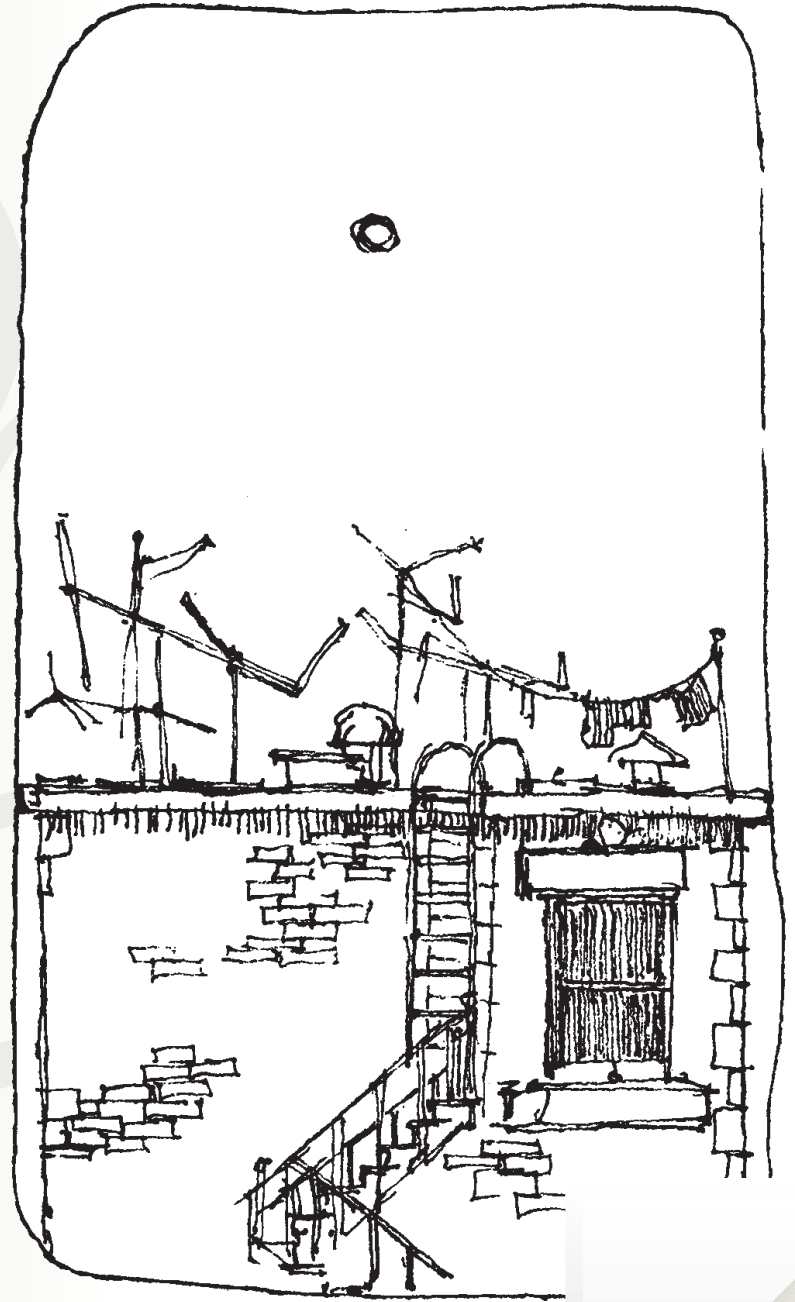
As if to prove
that I can work
the miracle of love
without you,
I go out hunting
nearly every night.

Having seldom been
the hunter -
nearly every time
the hunter's prey -
I've had some difficulty
changing roles.

It's as though I'd rather
stand and await the dying
than zoom in for the kill.

thirty-nine

I'm trying hard
to sleep - and more,
I'm trying
as best I can
to understand
how you held and hold
the whole of me
within your hand.



forty

This afternoon
these years later
was a long one,
and when the dogs
began to bark
I thought about
our winters past
and all of those
that might have come.

Halfway through
a certain memory
I let go.

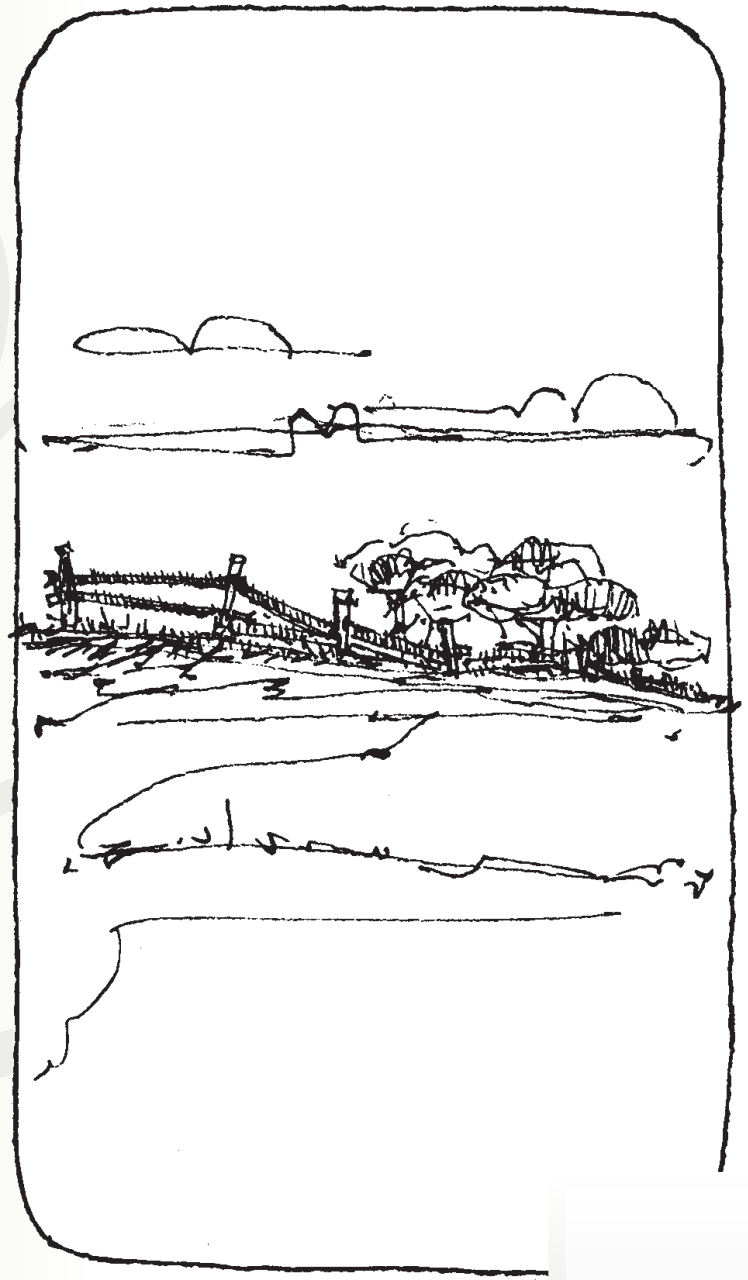
Letting go
doesn't prove
I love you less
now that you
grow darker
in the distance.
To me it proves
that you've
let go of me.

How slow I was
in learning
that reality belongs
to everyone
including me.

I can face
fantasy head on.
Truth is harder
to sort out and see
because it offers
much less comfort
than the dreams
we conjure

With your help
and your kind council
I've moved forward some.

I cannot add or take away
what you have been
or will be for me.
Until I learn some way
to multiply the memories,
how can I divide
fantasy from fact?



afterthought two

Come then strangers
and those of you I know,
form as one.
I fear you've done so
anyway and already.

And if your name
be litany or lie
I'll love you all the same
if you'll come close enough
to let me.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROD McKUEN was born in Oakland California in 1933. At eleven, he left home to work at jobs that took him throughout the western United States as rodman on a surveying unit, cowhand, lumberjack, ditchdigger, railroad worker, and finally rodeo cowboy. His first attention as a poet came in the early fifties, when he read with Kerouac and Ginsburg at San Francisco's Jazz Cellar. After serving two years as an infantryman in Korea, he returned as a singer of folksongs and eventually his own material at San Francisco's Purple Onion. Before becoming a best-selling author in the 1960's, McKuen had been a contract player at Universal studios and a vocalist with Lionel Hampton's band and had amassed a considerable following as a recording artist and nightclub performer

His books, numbering more than sixty titles, have been translated into some thirty languages and made him the best-selling, most widely read poet of his time. His film music has twice been nominated for Academy Awards (The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie & A Boy Named Charlie Brown). His classical works – symphonies, concertos, suites, chamber music and song cycles – are performed by leading orchestras and artists throughout the world. The City, a suite of Narrator & Orchestra, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Music.

He has written songs for nearly every important performer in the music business, producing standards that include "Love's Been Good To Me," "Jean", "I Think of You," "Rock Gently," "The World I Used To Know," and "I'll Catch The Sun,". His nearly seventeen-year collaboration and partnership with Jacques Brel that McKuen terms equal parts of translation, adaptation and collaboration produced "Seasons in the Sun." "If You Go Away," "I'm Not Afraid," "The Port of Amsterdam." "To You," "The Far West" and two dozen other songs.. These compositions, among others, have earned the writer-composer-performer more than forty gold and platinum records worldwide McKuen himself has recorded more than two hundred albums.

One of his most notable partnerships occurred during the 1970's when he and Anita Kerr teamed as author & composer to do a series of albums that featured The San Sebastian Strings. McKuen's poetic words set to the lush music and orchestrations of Miss Kerr produced 15 best selling albums for Warner Bros. Records, including the company's all time best-seller, "The Sea."

Rod McKuen's poetry is currently taught in schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries. Around the world He is recipient of the Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman Awards for outstanding achievement in poetry, and the Brandeis University Literary Trust Award for "continuing excellence and contributions to contemporary poetry." "The Power Bright & Shinning" a book of poetry on America won him the first Amendment and Freedoms Foundation Awards..

In the past several years he has spent his time producing a series of nearly 300 CD's made up of released and unreleased recordings from the extensive masters owned by Stanyan Records.

In April of 1988 he turned his talent to the Internet and the result is a popular web site entitled "Rod McKuen / A Safe Place To land - www.mckuen.com In addition to poetry, music, photographs and personal information the author contributes a daily column to the site under the heading "Flight Plan." And periodic installments of a new book slated for publication next fall. In the year ahead McKuen plans to resume recording and concert tours.

He lives in Southern California with his brother Edward and four cats Rocky, Dinah, Kubby and Sunny. Throughout his life, McKuen has been an avid music and record collector and is considered by many to have one of the world's largest private record collections. "My one unfulfilled dream," he says, "is to build a barn to house the collection."

