**Rincon de Poeta**

**(The Poet’s Corner)**

**Poems from 75-year’s Perspective**

**By**

**Carl Lahser**

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**Rincon de Carl**

**(Rincón de Viejo)**

**Poems from 75-year’s Perspective**

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These poems are the result of discussions, observations, daydreams, and wishful thinking. They are mental exercises significant of nothing but my personal entertainment. There is Mexican and Oriental influence in some. I hope you like them.

carl

**I Wonder**

**Black, black hair.**

**Shoulder length.**

**Cascading.**

**Undulating.**

**Reflecting sunny highlights.**

**Would I still be attracted**

**if I saw her face?**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**First Hours of Fall**

**Sitting beside you**

**on an afternoon in early fall**

**evoked memories**

**of sitting beside you**

**on pleasant afternoons in spring**

**and of missing you all summer**

**when you sat beside another.**

**What a long miserable summer it was.**

**Fall afternoons**

**have brought you back.**

**Where will we be**

**when winter winds**

**begin to sigh?**

**Where will we spend our winter?**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**THE WALK**

**mid afternoon on a fine fall day**

**overcast and humid after a quick shower**

**footfalls muffled by damp leaves**

**a jay screams in the distance**

**an acorn falls shattering the heavy stillness**

**We walk not speaking**

**holding hands where the path is wide enough**

**to a log on the edge of a clearing**

**sitting and watching cardinals flit**

**through the changing and thinning leaves**

**holding hands**

**memorizing worn knuckles**

**scarred fingers, age spots, and bluish veins**

**until we silently agree it’s time to return**

**up the silent path through the half light**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**MIND PICTURES**

**I'll paint a picture from my mind -**

**the most desirable face in womankind;**

**a sexy philosopher with an orderly mind;**

**luscious boobs and a pert behind -**

**on a canvas of silk oh so fine.**

**Then I'll look and see what I can find**

**remembering that looks is just the rind.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Donde**

**It is cool**

**A Sarah Vaughn vinyl LP plays**

**with hisses and scratches**

**Lights are low**

**Donde? Where are you?**

**Spring and overcast**

**Quiet trail through blooming**

**azaleas and dogwoods**

**a wooden bridge and a robin call.**

**Where are you?**

**On a tropical beach at sunset**

**pina coladas.**

**lobster on the grill.**

**A tarpon rolls and mullet scatter.**

**Where are you?**

**A sampan skims across the South China Sea.**

**On the Nile a dhow drifts**

**with creaking ropes and planks**

**Mist rises and clouds form**

**hiding Machu Pichu.**

**Where are you?**

**Where are you?**

**With me always**

**wherever you may be.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Glimpses**

**I saw her in a Christmas crowd**

**but she vanished in a sea of bobbing heads**

**I called to her in the Plaka in Athens**

**but she turned and spoke to me in Bulgarian**

**I bought her favorite drink from across a bar in St Louis**

**but she was gone before the waiter arrived**

**Countless glimpses of her over fifty years**

**in airports, on busy city streets, on passing busses**

**She must be gone**

**consumed by time, absorbed in space**

**existing only in a tiny corner of memory**

**unchanged in fifty years**

**as I grow old alone**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**A MEMORY PROD**

**Driving through the city park**

**for the first time in years**

**I saw an old oak tree with one low-hanging branch**

**that had a distinct dip about mid-way along its length.**

**I remembered a girl back in our high school days**

**posing on this dip**

**arms crossed on the rough bark**

**chin resting on overlapping hands**

**head tilted with a sly smile.**

**The tree was still there**

**but where is the girl**

**of a half century past?**

**Her and the beguiling smile**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Full Moon**

**A full moon and setting sun**

**The red and orange of sunset**

**contrast the pastel gold of moonrise**

**like chrome and pewter**

**I have watched five hundred risings of the moon**

**-floating over sparse spruce and aspen forests**

**and cranberry bogs of the arctic;**

**-surfacing from long tranquil fetches of open ocean**

**-leaping over waves crashing into coral reefs;**

**-swinging out of steamy jungle green in the sudden tropical night;**

**-eerily lighting the ruins of a hundred dead or dying civilizations;**

**-moon washing maize and squash patches;**

**Montane valleys; desert vistas;**

**-from aircraft where rising and setting of the sun or**

**moon can be played like a yo-yo;**

**-peeking through buildings in crowded cities.**

**The best and most exciting full moons**

**have been and will be**

**in your company.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Jogger**

**brown pony tail**

**whipping left**

**then whipping right**

**in counterpoint to her hips**

**She personifies the Big Bopper song**

**“That’s what I like”.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**SUNS IN ORBIT**

**In another young and boundless world**

**we swam in the surf**

**and dried in the sun**

**nibbled sparkling salt crystals**

**from tanned flesh**

**rinsed in a rainwater pool**

**with gentle touches**

**There was intensity**

**of the sun**

**the touches**

**the wonder of being young**

**In another universe**

**on another night**

**the owl called through an open window**

**and we had picked persimmons**

**that cool evening in the fall**

**and moonlight made**

**tan skin look alabaster**

**Another pot of tea is brewing**

**and you are**

**friend and lover**

**day and night**

**beginning and end**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Three-Gallon Churn**

**(A Cheapskates Valentine)**

**On Valentine's Day**

**we were poking through antique shops**

**holding hands and**

**making snide comments in a whisper**

**when I found a priceless**

**brown Meyer three-gallon churn**

**(without lid and dasher)**

**A faint reflection in its dark brown glaze**

**showed us me as a child**

**on Saturday morning**

**sitting on a kitchen chair**

**with the cool churn between my bare feet**

**cool cream waiting to become butter**

**I stroked the dasher up and down**

**and listened to Let's Pretend on the radio**

**hoping the butter would hurry**

**so I could get a glass of cool fresh buttermilk**

**and go out and play**

**Two hundred dollars!!**

**Memories are worth a lot**

**but not for just an old brown pot**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**TIME, SHE HAS CHANGED**

**It was once that any time my hand**

**touched her thigh**

**or caressed her hip**

**or stroked her breast**

**that my Chica would**

**satisfy my manly needs**

**I am still macho and the need is still there**

**but time, she has changed**

**Mi Chica now she acts like the gringas**

**I knew when I played Sancho**

**The gringas often said "No"**

**and would sometimes fight like they meant "No"**

**Now when I touch mi Chica it is like a spark**

**It makes her jump away like my hand was hot**

**I am still macho and I still have my needs**

**but many times I am left like a stallion**

**on a hot summer day**

**with his macanudo displayed**

**just cooling himself**

**Time and mi Chica, they are changing**

**Sancho has gotten old and the gringas**

**they say "No" more often**

**But they don't understand that I am macho**

**They think I must change like the time.**

**But I am MACHO.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**White Bat**

**Plums had set on the old gnarled tree**

**when a hoary white bat found us**

**circled round us**

**and gave us a thousand years**

**The plums have ripened**

**and time is held in a polished ironwood box**

**carved with a peach**

**and bats on the four corners**

**The box sits on a table between our chairs.**

**Take my hand and I will keep you as warm**

**as our kung and two mau taan**

**until the owl cries out in the night**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**WEST SIDE ONE**

**The old man sits on the front steps**

**of the white shiplap house**

**on south Alamo St**

**the house he grew up in**

**He sits and listens**

**to the summer cicada**

**in the hackberry tree**

**and the rumble of trucks and busses**

**He is comfortable in a plain white T-shirt**

**and a weeks growth of white beard.**

**His bad fitting dentures sit in the kitchen.**

**He and the house are getting old.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**GROWING UP, GROWING OLD**

**I grew up poor**

**doing without**

**making do**

**frugal**

**I still don’t like to spend**

**I indulge myself**

**on occasion as a treat**

**new shoes or a new jacket**

**replacing my ten year old pickup**

**traveling tourist**

**a fancy meal for my birthday**

**I see people**

**inflated with self-importance**

**a legend in their own mind**

**indulging in the latest fads of food and fashion**

**maintaining a fragile lifestyle**

**diminishing themselves**

**Sometimes I am envious**

**but usually I’m a make-do dinosaur**

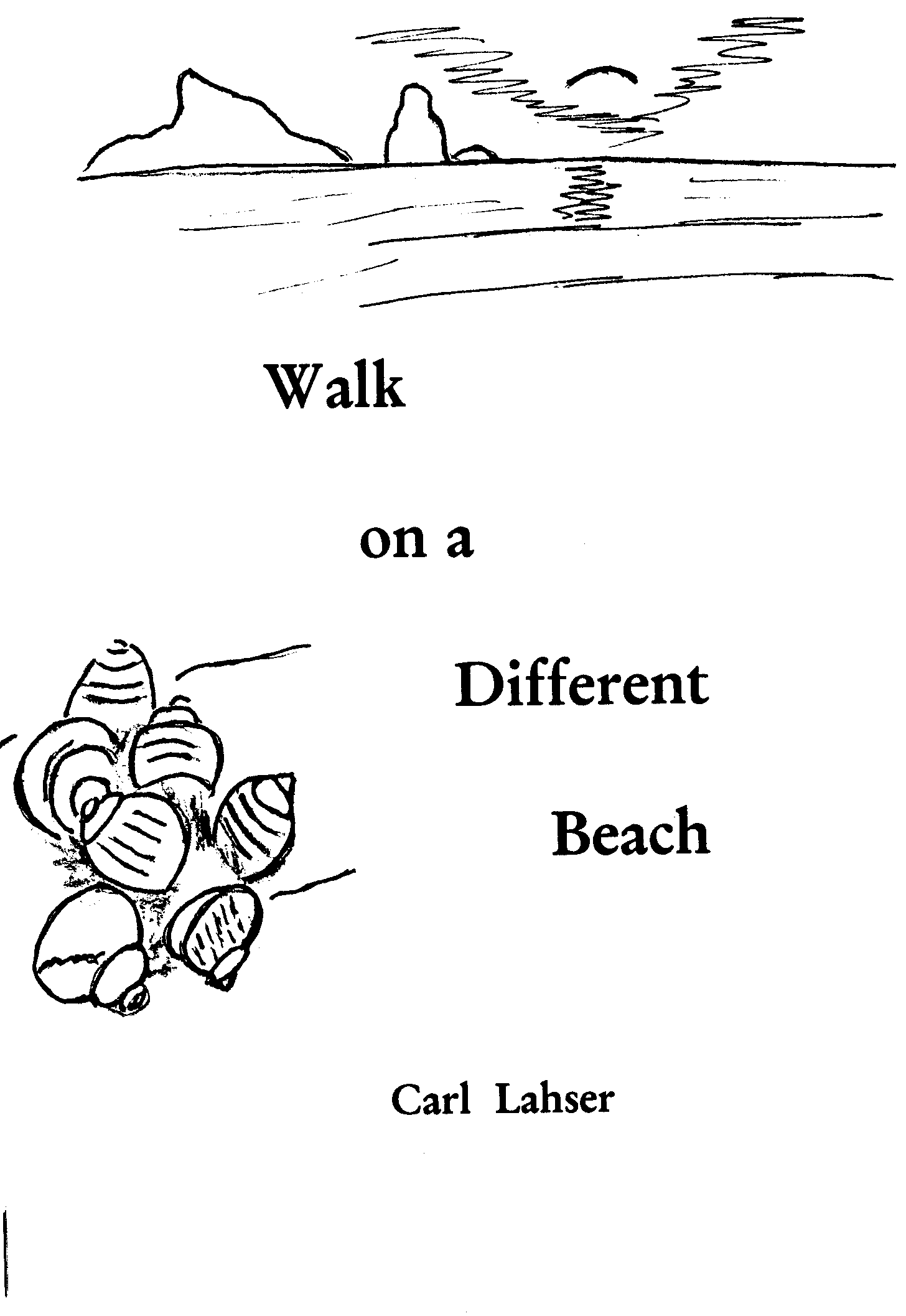
**a throwback to my frugal, hard working roots**

**surviving**

**aging gracefully**

**Carl 4Nov 2012**

**+++++**



This collection of poems represents scenes on several beaches during a 24-hour period. Tropical beaches of Florida, Guam, Mexico and the cold northern beaches each have different things to experience and different marine life. I have enjoyed reliving the experiences.

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**WHERE WOULD I LIKE TO GO?**

**You**

ask where I would like to go

Swim in the tropics?

Play in the snow?

**I**

would like to dive Cancun

study old temples

and walk the beach

in the moon

**Or**

go off to the desert

to capture some snakes

look at the cactus

as we walk

the dry lakes

**Or**

look at the flowers

as we walk through a park

hear rippling water

and the song of the lark

**Or**

off to the north and the Eskimo

where the caribou wander

and there is plenty of snow

**I’m peripatetic**

but you must understand

I won’t go anyplace

I can’t hold your hand

**Beach Boardwalk**

Bright water, white foam

hot sun and waving sea oats

saltwater marsh grass

a silent boardwalk provides quick

passage from bathhouse to beach

\*\*\*\*\*

**NIGHT ON A TROPICAL BEACH**

A no moon sky

with pale clouds drifting by

while bright stars twinkle

Polaris is too far north to be seen

The sea is phosphorescent

Waves break in a flashing crescent

and the beach seems to faintly glow

in the star shine to the edge

of water's dark, dark green

A cruise ship with a million lights

passes silently like a blight

on the far, dark horizon.

A Black Skimmer glides by

calling to the warm-cool breeze

In the distance, hotels fight the nights

all show red aircraft hazard lights

A ghostly couple passes

an apparition framed

against the pitch-black sky and sea

\*\*\*\*\*

**MORNING ON CANCUN BEACH**

It's light enough to see a couple walking hand in hand

and kicking an impertinent wave

A sliver moon is talking

to the sun still behind the horizon in night's cave

A lone pelican cruises the surf

while two Tropicbirds circle for altitude

A weak sun peeks through thin clouds to see who is on its turf

The pelican crashes into the sea and surfaces with a pouch of food

A bright orange sun disc

burns through the scud

and the orange suns reflection

appears upon the choppy flood

silhouetting the lone pelican

\*\*\*\*\*

**Cancun Sand**

The beach is all public - yea!!

and I jog on the coraline sand

that doesn't get hot in the sun

The sand is a cool, hard pavement under the retreating wave.

Just above this narrow strip of sand

is a soft slurry like fresh cement

As the water drains the sand is cool and crisp like fresh meringue.

This gradually dries

to loose blowing sand

I guess I jog differently

**\*\*\*\*\***

**CROWN OF THORNS I**

Crown of Thorns!

Acanthaster!

Reefs all gone, man cries

"Disaster!"

"Not to worry," sings the sea

"No hurry. Time is the Master."

**CROWN OF THORNS II**

Crown of Thorns

Typhoon spawned

Nurtured by high island rains

They vanish into the reef

Five years of rest and privacy

prepares it to burst onto the scene

en masse to devour the reef

and disappear.

Pacific atolls have Acanthaster

but not as the hungry herd

that devours a dozen species of coral

like on high islands.

A reef of dead white stony coral skeletons

is not a pleasant sight but

on inspection only a few species dominate.

Recolonization restores diversity and health.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Tropical Fisherman**

A lone fisherman,

his brown body burned darker yet by the sun

bare footed,

in shorts and New York Jets T-shirt.

He walks the beach in the false dawn

with a castnet

draped over his left shoulder

at the ready

Two quick steps into the surf

and the shapeless net

springs like a snake

It's large, round mouth biting the sea.

Net sounds -

a small thunk of weights

thrown hard at the water,

a slerissh sound as the netting

cuts the surface

and a quiet hiss tiny bubbles breaking

Restrained by the rope on his wrist

the net settles

Retrieved, the net contains silver flashes

in the folds of the net

The fisherman is silently thankful for the

bounty and beauty of the sea

**Kenai Shells**

a few shells on the beach

most would come from the trawlers

beached for the winter

but they usually just keep the fish and crabs

\*\*\*\*\*

**Arctic Noon**

I stepped out for lunch

into the late September

Anchorage sun

and found

my shadow

3 o'clock long

but pointing north

\*\*\*\*\*

**SEA LION PUP**

On the dark rocky beach at La Push

lay a four month old sea lion pup

Forty pounds of dirty white fur

with black spots and large dreamy eyes

she helplessly watched the beach

waiting for night, the tide, and Mom

to return

**WINNIPEG RIVER:**

**SUMMER SOLSTICE SUNRISE**

On the Winnipeg River it was light at four

the horizon was broken with trees

The sun rose at Oh Five Ten

ushered in by a swift, cool breeze

Half the river was a mirror

that reflected the rising sun

The other half was covered with ripples,

the breeze was having fun

Herring Gulls called

and the breeze disappeared

The sky turned pink then yellow then blue

The longest day of the year had dawned

Half the solar year was through

\*\*\*\*\*

**AN HOUR ON A BEACH ON GUAM**

The beach looks inviting from the cliff line

light tan and

cool, bluegreen water

over patches of sand

dark green water over rocks and beds of grass

I ask a favor of the spirits of the wind and water

and the tautaumonas

and the dwendies

to be allowed to

visit this beach and remember this hour

The tide has turned, ebbing

waves begin to break over the reef

Water over the reef decreases

and the advancing waves seem to trip

over the reef as they talk quietly with the wind

The trade winds, blowing lightly make short-lived lines

of white foam

on the crest

of low swells

on the beautiful blue Philippine Sea

The sea beyond the reef is a marvelous

bright, living blue

reflecting the clear blue sky

or dark grayblue

when brief clouds cover the hot tropical sun

Wavelets of the ebbing tide fall further and further

from my feet

and retreat,

not angry, but

promising to return on the turning of the tide

The hammer of the waves leaves the tan sand smooth,

pounded flat by the wavelets

that marked the high tide

with a line of shells and coral

and small clumps of seaweed and flotsam

Above this driftline the sand is loose

and tracked by the wind,

etched by dragging grass blades

and feet of small beach crabs

in the sugary crust formed by drying spray

Beach morning glory and salt resistant grass

stabilize the sand

for the moment

The light breeze

writes friendly letters to the sun and moon

A lone coconut tree offers shade on the hot sand.

A light breeze lifts

coconut leaves and

makes a hollow, rustling

that rattles faster when the breeze freshens

In my hand lay a small, transparent creature

that had lived

in the seaweed

and rode the waves

to become stranded on the beach

The creature lies quietly, then

SNAP!!

An electric spark

seems to burn my hand,

a pistol shrimp disappears back into the sea

I sit on the sand in the sun among

fallen filaments of coconut fronds,

roots of beach morning glories,

and broken sea shells and

watch convective clouds form on the horizon

A small black ant crawls through the forest of hair

on my forearm

and emerges

from the jungle

back on the sand of the beach

A larger light brown ant explores my pants

then over my belly

and ribs before

rejoining his comrades

in their endless search for food

A small tan spider, almost invisible against the sand,

scurries across the sand

then stops at my outstretched foot

then scurries off

disappearing each time it stops

A stray breeze carelessly plays

with the hair on my arm

and the hair on my leg

and nuzzles

the hair on the small of my back

Young wavelets play at breaking on the beach

seeming to shout

"There's a surfer on my back."

or "I'm a storm wave crashing."

like children at cops and robbers

The sun is bearing down hot like a charcoal iron

but a sun shower interrupts and deposits

three drops on my left leg,

one drop on each foot,

and five drops on my right shoulder

The shower and cloud are gone. A cool breeze rushes

to erase all traces of the water droplets

now gone but for

the fleeting cool spots

where they fell

It is time to leave this ever-changing but changeless scene

brush the sand from my bare legs

and hands and clothes

and thank the beach gods

for the honor or this visit

Down the beach a sprouting coconut

lies half buried

with its second leaf

beginning to unfurl

from its rotting husk

At the base of the fossil cliff

is what remains

of a WWII Japanese

gun emplacement

This war relict

looking lost in this time and place

constructed of cemented boulders and

still showing the wood grain

of its concrete forms

Now in this historic field of fire

American and Japanese children

former enemies

now playing in the trees

living together on the beach

Away from the permanent change of the sea

and the temporary insults of Man.

Its black, rectangular gun port, slowly eroding,

peers myopically from the base of the cliff

unnatural and formal in this natural tropical jungle setting

Another sunshower speeds me on my way,

away from the sound

of the waves

and wind

and memories freshly made

Carl Lahser, July 1982

\*\*\*\*\*

**Personal Observations on not Snorkeling**

**for Several Years**

Years ago I would slip on worn Levi's,

a sweat shirt, mask, snorkel and tennis shoes

and snorkel for hours

I could free dive to 35 feet

and stay down for two minutes

Today I found that if I could see it

I couldn't reach it

and I could not distinguish whatever I picked up

I could not stay down a whole minute

My ears hurt below ten feet

My legs told me about an hour of flippering was enough

I may be getting old

but I prefer to think

I'm just out of practice

\*\*\*\*\*

**MAÑANA TEA**

"Cafe, Senior?"

"Hot tea, please."

"Que?"

"Una taza de te caliente, por favor."

"Oh. Si, Senior. Right away."

Hot water arrives but no tea.

Time passes.

"Mozo, por favor."

"Senior?"

"Traigame una taza de te.?"

"Si. Si. Right away."

The water is like warm when the tea bag arrives.

"Mozo, por favor."

"Senior?'

"Traigame una taza de aqua caliente?"

"Que?"

"I want hot tea, dammit!"

"Oh. Si, Senior. Right away."

He brings me a cold beer with a sly grin.

"Salute. And to Hell with the tea."

**Lagoon Evening**

Waiting for the lobster to cook

we watched the sun set

behind the mangrove trees

in a short burst of color

A silver sliver moon

who trailed the sun by two hours

reflected off the lagoon

framed first by the orange glow,

then by the black of night

Two moons and

pina coladas

on Cozumel.

Memories are painted just so

\*\*\*\*\*

**Five Egrets**

It was evening by the pool

at the Cancun Clipper Club and

a full moon claimed the sky

Pool and hotel lights

softly lit the scene

with flitting reflections

Five egrets spooked from the lagoon

flew over the pool

white against the sky challenging the moon

\*\*\*\*\*

**Tropicbird**

a white-tailed Tropicbird rides

on thermal air currents.

Scarcely moving it glides.

A long, forked tail

streaming out behind it chides

a Cuban fishing boat for

belching diesel smoke.

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE TROPICBIRD**

**AND THE MOON**

The

afternoon

moon

was two days from full and three hours out of the sea

when a Tropicbird

with long, forked tail

and coal black wings

gliding,

gliding,

flew over

the moon

**\*\*\*\*\***

**TYNDALL BEACH**

**IN LATE SUMMER:**

**SCENES for a NATURALIST**

Setting: Predawn through sunset and into the night, a day on the beach at Tyndall AFB. This beautiful sandy shell beach is located east of Panama City, Florida on the Gulf of Mexico.

Time: A fine day in late summer.

**SCENE 1: Breaking Day**

Ghostly birds sit quietly

or run on the beach flirting with the waves

waiting for the sun to rise

The birds fly as I approach leaving no tracks

At extreme low tide

the beach has a step down into a moat

where the water depth increases to several feet

Schools of juvenile fish, blue crabs and

occasional stingrays

cruise the step feeding on the largess

from both the incoming sea and retreating waves

A stingray flies silently on rippling wings

along the step

It stops and, with a flip of its fringing fins,

disappears into the sand

Only its eyes and gill openings remain in sight

A small cloud of sand and crushed shells

is expelled from its gill slits

and the hunt for clams continues

A lone bristleworm, (genus Thelepsus),

pulled from its tube in the sand

by a small sandpiper,

lies twisting and gyrating trying to orient itself

No longer in the confining but

nondimensional sand matrix

it flails about like a swimmer in an undertow

**SCENE 2: Mid Day**

A wave retreats

A hundred small shapes scurry in random patterns

Beating the retreating wave back to the ocean

they disappear, diving into

and swimming through the fluid wet sand

*Emerita (Hippa) talpoida*, the sand bug

its molted skeletons litter the beach

In a mass of eel-grass washed up on the beach

lie several empty egg cases of the skate

their purpose achieved

This kin of the stingray lays eggs

in black, leathery protective pouches

The "Devil's Coin Purse" is five inches long

with horns on each corner

A hundred species of shells litter the beach

Most are broken not by storms but crunched

by octopus and fish like the Drum

Many are pierced by small round holes

of predatory *Urosalpinx cinere*

feeding on their cousins

Others are pulled open

and devoured by starfish

A three by five inch sea slug or nudibranch

of the family Dorididae

lies stranded above the last wave

its translucent oval body

a cream and lemon yellow

half buried in the sand

Placed back in the sea it swims away slowly

**SCENE 3. Towards Evening**

White sand dollars are dead

Whole or in pieces they lie

sprinkled on the beach

among shells and other flotsam

Live sand dollars live in the surf

just below the low tide line

brown-green circles buried in the sand

Small, thin and rounded *Dendraster* and

the larger, fatter *Echinarachnius parma*

both charm the beachcomber

The afternoon sand squawks under bare feet

like the fresh snow in the moonlight

I never tried bare feet in the snow

Clouds gather on the horizon

as if to cushion the red sinking sun

Three pelicans in formation fly

across the inflated red ball

and crash into the sea

**SCENE 4. Tyndall Beach at night**

**1. Board walk**

From the lighted parking lot

past the bath house with a dozen tree frogs

to the boardwalk

where the hum of mosquitoes is muted

by passionate calls of five species

of frogs and toads

my hollow thunking footsteps

take me to the moon lit beach

**2. Beach and Surf**

Full moon is a little past the zenith

On Tyndall Beach the sand

glows a milky white

Wet, broken shells sparkle in the moon light

A coyote hunting crabs is spooked

and runs off into the dunes

The ebb tide is near its turning point

Quiet ghostly waves slosh on the beach

pursuing and drawing

feeding Plovers and Sandpipers

up and down the hard packed sand

A Blue Crab scuttles sideways

into a retreating wave

retreating from my muffled footfalls

The bites of Salt Marsh mosquitoes

their hum drowned in surf and breeze

finally drive me from the early morning beach

**SCENE 5: Hurricane**

1**. The Storm**

The boardwalk leads to the beach

as cold gray clouds sit on the horizon

The strangely lit sea is uncommonly flat

with the impression of being oily

Cumulus clouds build

Sundogs and itinerant showers

walk across the bays

and down the beaches

The wind rises and the surf builds

Huge swells run over the barrier reef

and break on the beach with a crash

and an explosion of flying spume

The waves press higher on the beach

until they lap at the base of the dunes

The rising wind howls and

blows the surf higher

Large drops of stinging rain fly horizontally

the stinging drops cutting into the dunes

The storm surge carries the sea

and its flotsam and jetsam

over the dunes and into the Spartina marsh

and pine forest a mile inland

The wind falls off and the surf declines

as the eye of the hurricane passes to the west

The boardwalk has gone with the wind

**2. Aftermath**

The wind dies, its roar fading to a moan

Clouds and rain slacken and

sundogs walk the ocean

Pine, oaks and seaoats die in the salt water

or are burned on their windward side

desiccated by the salt spray

or hundred mile winds

The beach is rearranged

Dunes are gone

Only five-foot piles of sand remain

Several deep cuts almost succeeded

in punching through to St Andrews Bay

Headwalls, docks and other beach structures

are gone or non-functional

but the observation tower remains

A fiberglass sailboat

lies stranded on the beach

Gulls have a field day harvesting

hurricane casualties

A blue sky welcomes the inspection teams

**Scene 6. Rain on the Beach**

**1. Summer Showe**r

On a bright but overcast day

a shower walks down the beach

and a piece of the horizon disappears in haze

As a shower walks down the beach

the breeze freshens and cools the afternoon

the waves flatten and sea oats begin to croon

As a shower walks down the beach

a mist blows and light rain begins to fall

Mothers grab towels and kids

and run to escape the squall

Hard rain falls for a short time

then passes and the sun begins to shine

as the shower continues down the beach

**2. Fall Storm**

Wind howls through the oaks and pines

and whistles past the sea oats on the dunes

as gray clouds gathering in the north

attack the afternoon

A cold mist begins to fall and drifts like ghosts

Sea and clouds blend into an ominous gray

Whitecaps stop breaking on the barrier reef

and the shore birds cease to play

A cold, pelting rain begins to fall pounding flat

footprints of the last visitors and

sand etching of the sea oats

and small shells protruding from the sand

The rain slackens and the wind drops

The mist turns to virga and waves begin to roll

Each raindrop has left its dimple

Sea life stranded on the sand has paid the toll

A gull lands

looks out to sea

Laughing, it scans the beach for lunch

**Fossil Mind**

I sit in the midst of a Cretaceous fossil bed

a hillside of marine animals

50 million years dead

A submerged reef of oysters turned to stone

now lies exposed to the western sun

Time has flown

and the sea has gone

The shells remain

mute evidence that nothing is permanent

but change

**Cold Stony Beaches**

Cold morning mist

on the shingle beach at Kremasti

the snowcapped Carian mountains in the distance

takes me back

to other cold, rocky shores

that were waiting for the sun

Cobbles clicking in the surf

on beaches at Argentia and Topsail

in the province of Newfoundland

with ice floes hidden in the mist

Seastacks peeking from lowering clouds

off a beach of metamorphic stones

on the Straits of Juan de Fuca

Low waves slopping

on volcanic Icelandic beaches

with fishermen’s voices carrying through

the Gulf Stream’s steamy fog

Waiting.

Waiting hopelessly for a summer sun

to lift the leaden skies

and break the hyperborean spell

**Broken Shells**

You see a million seashells

resting on the sand

Pick them up and look at them

hold them in your hand

Coweries, cones and cockles

some whole but many broken

Did storms break these delicate shells

with violence unspoken?

Just try to break one yourself

Most are as hard as rock

Fossil shells are to geologists

an archeological clock

What is the source of holes

and chips and chunks

that damage all these shells?

Who is the culprit?

What stories can they tell?

Who chipped the margin of a Sunray Venus

like an oyster shuckers knife?

How about a sea crab

out supper shopping for his wife

Or those small round holes in half a clam

that could be used to attach a chain

They are drilled by the tongues of Oyster Drills

or Moon Shells their dinner to obtain

Or those square holes in conchs and cones

and many other shells

These are often around the den

where octopuses dwell

A starfish pulls bivalves apart and inserts

its stomach to digest the shells contents

Barnacles and jingle shells can

live on other shells without paying any rent

Cones hunt for lunch

with a poisonous harpoon

They even run their victims down

in snail time, much too soon

True. Some shells are broken

by vicious storms or knocks

but most die by the hand of hunters –

the feeding of the flock

# SAND

Sand grinds between my teeth

Sand is in my ears and hair

Sand is in my bathing suit

Next to my body bare

Fine silicon sand waits in my bed

Sand crunches in my jelly sandwich

Giant sand dunes are just sitting there

Blowing sand slithers down the beach

Sand and salt spray covers the car

Sand like B-Bs rolls on the floor

If you don’t like sand everywhere you look

Just what did you come to the beach for?

Carl 991105

\*\*\*\*\*

Sea Pigeons

Tiptoeing on the surface

On the trough between the waves

Scaring up food

\*\*\*\*\*

**A Wooded Wetland**

A meandering creek

divides a sunlit, grassy meadow

and disappears into a cool, moist woods

The creek with its Vaccinium, grape

and poison ivy vines

is a sharp contrast to the meadows' grass

with speckles of yellow clover and ranunculus flowers

The woods present a sudden change

a curtain of greenbriar and Solomon’s Seal and muscadine

try to hide tulip popular, Holly, Sassafras and willow oak

The damp shade causes thin, young trees

to stretch towards the sun

Moist air supports rotting wood, fungi

and a hundred kinds insects

Just inside the woods

the stream ceases its flow and

becomes a wooded wetland with skunk cabbage and cinnamon fern and anaerobic mudBirch, beech and willow oak are still growing in the water

Black leaves and brown water rings mark at least

a year’s standing water. A beaver pond?

The trees show stress

from standing in water.

There is a flash of bare, beaver-gnawed birch

a white beacon through the shadow

Dead pointed stumps of trees

emerge from the water

Then, with the slap of its tail

a beaver disappears its lodge

A new beaver dam

backs up two feet of water

killing trees and filling the wetland with silt

Change in progress

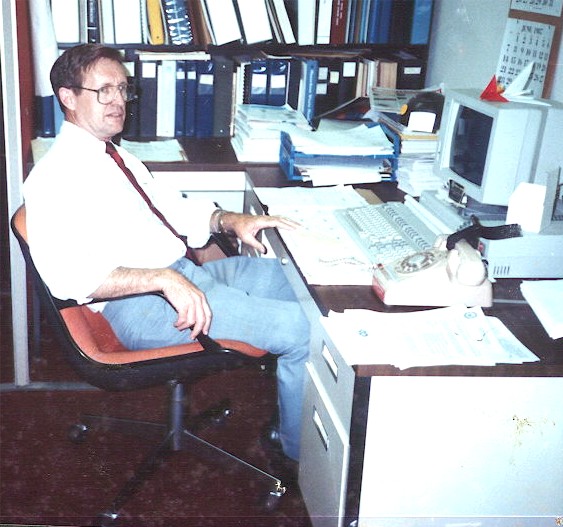
A redwing blackbird lands on the lodge

A teal launches from an open pool

Strawberries bloom on the mud

Carl/930520

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****

**Back to work!!**

Traffic

Games

By

Carl Lahser

**A Drivers Guide to**

**Driving Entertainment.**

**Delightful Games for**

**Freeways, Roads and Streets**

Traffic Games

Dedicated to K. T. Berger and his book, *The Zen of Driving,* that opened my eyes to the possibility of games played behind the wheel and road rage. It is also dedicated to an unnamed judge who didn’t believe road games exist and to the many players, willing or not.

Carl Lahser

**HIGHWAY GAMES**

Highways and byways

Two-ways and thruways

Dull ways and die ways

Prototype games

For the multilane funways

Freeways are boring

as you drift along

On the FM some cowboy

has ruined a song

You think of the world

and all that is wrong

You've thought of some games

to enliven this throng

**Let the games begin**!

Game number one is easy to play

Tap the brake for no reason

Send out that red ray

Hear what the driver behind

has to say?!

He's entered the game

in a colorful way

Game number two

takes a little more work

but blood pressures rise

as they go berserk

Speed up. Slow down

Speed change seems to work

The highway game

Frustration and anger

pave the way to the kirk

If number two's fun

number three's a real blast

Just speed up a little

as some jerk tries to go past

He can't get around you

he's trapped and harassed

He's playing the game

He's one of the cast

Number four takes a little more skill

A wee bit of practice

yields a much bigger thrill

Merging lanes. Testament of will

Advanced highway game

only for those

who play for the kill

The creep on the on-ramp

is craning his neck

Maintain constant vector

and you'll sure intersect

He'll have to slow down

or else you'll connect

You won that game

and he's madder than heck

Game number five

is off-ramp defender

Stay in the curb lane

Don't let anyone enter

Accelerate. Slow down

Keep him in the center

The joy of the game!

He missed his exit

Now he's a dementer

This last game is for those

who live just for chance

Cut in real close

like you want to dance

Follow real close

and they might wet their pants

Lose this game

and win a ride home

in a big ambulance

Prototype games

Try your own innovations

Highways and skyways

Two-ways and thruways

Dumb-way-to-die-ways

You can't win the games

On the multilane highways

**ROAD GAMES**

Arteries and avenues

Thoroughfares and lanes

Boulevards and bullock paths

Traffics a pain

Games for the traffic jam

Games for the rain

Games on the road

can't be played alone

Singles matches or team sports

skills must be honed

Players intentional

and players unknown

Road games

Losers can die

and winners dethroned

Game number one makes

fellow drivers jaws tight

Drive slowly and only you

makes it through the green light

A long line of traffic waits

if you did it right

A point for your side!

You're hot!

Your future looks bright

Game number two takes guts

and good luck

Dive out into traffic

in front of a truck

Extra points if he jackknifes

while onlookers duck

Bonus points!

You're a winner!

You're running amock

Lets try another game

that will make the brakes squeal

Pass and crowd in

then make a turn with great skill

They won't hit your old wreck

and you gave them a thrill

They braked

and got hit in the deal

Suggested games

Try your own variations

Arteries and avenues

Thoroughfares and lanes

Boulevards and bullock paths

Traffics a pain

Games for the traffic jam

Games for the rain

**Street Games**

Streets with curbs and gutters

Streets that run through town

Main streets

Back streets

Streets run all around

Street games are simple

Street games are quick

Kids and dogs and tricycles

Drivers, take your pick

If you don't see anyone coming

let's play rolling stop

You saved a second rolling through

that STOP sign

But you lose if there's a cop

Next, let's practice confusion

Stop at the next YIELD sign

It will make up for those rolling stops

and blow the other drivers mind

Let's make one

of those wide country turns

Start by just slowing down

Signal a right turn

from the curb lane

and swing left

just to confuse that clown

Then make a quick right turn

We're going to town

Skid Tires On Pavement

That's what the STOP sign stands for

A tap on the brakes then let those horses roar

Stop signs can be inconvenient

One's hanging on Hell’s front door

There's a real fun game

in the suburbs

It’s called kiddy roulette

Roar down the street

just as school's letting out

and see how many you get

See kids and dogs go flying

You're making their mothers fret

Speeding through school zones

Is really not fair.

You could easily get six or eight.

The only excuse is just hot air

it's your turn to carpool and

you're six minutes late

Its best in a big station wagon

with all the neighbor kids for freight

Streets with curbs and gutters

Streets that run through town

Main streets

Back streets

Streets run all around

**ARE YOU READY FOR THE GAMES**

Road games and street games

Highway games too

You think they're sick games

and don't concern you

You don't believe in mind games

They don't really exist

Nobody really acts that way

Some point has been missed

**Are you ready for the games?**

Have you ever thought

that you owned the road?

That they are using your highway

and you're about to explode

That they go too fast or too slow

in your lane?

Did you ever coast

through a stop sign?

Or thought signals a pain?

You don't like little sports cars

or big eighteen-wheelers

And politicians rank

way above used car dealers

Did you ever wish for a cannon

or, maybe, a big bomb

Then you'd really fix that yoyo

(Who cares if it’s your mom)

You are driving the limit and

they are right on your tail

You'd blow them all to Hell

if you just had the bail

They cut right in front

and you think of some names

Relax

You just qualified

to play serious

vehicular games

**LET THE REAL GAMES BEGIN.**

Let

the

**Real**

Games

Begin!!

Cryptic Romance

A Poetic Play for my 40th Anniversary

by

Carl Lahser

## Cast of Characters

# Male 1 High school student

# Female 1 High school student

# Male 2 Young adult

# Female 2 Young adult

Male 3 Older adult

Female 3 Older adult female

### Male 4 Old adult male

# Female 4 Old adult female

### Scene

In the manner of the Bard this story poeticly traces the love life of a man from High School, through military service, a job, and into retirement. Scenes are enactment of topical poems. Sixty years of romance without using the “L” word. The stage is divided. Stage right has a bench and is fully lighted. Stage left is behind a scrim. An old man sits on a bench holding a white rose and in a dim light watches spotlighted memories of his past.

## Time

# Twelve scenes from the 1950s to present

## Scene 1

**How’s Your Que Dice (kay-DE-say) Today?**

TIME: Early childhood.

At Rise: Female 4 and Male 4 sit on a bench reminiscing about parents and growing up. Stage left dark.

### MALE 4

Feels like yesterday. You and me for sixty years.

**FEMALE 4**

Feels more like a hundred years if you ask me you old fool. Arthritis and all. You aren’t thinking about getting frisky are you?

### MALE 4

# Don’t you wish. I was just thinking about the past. Remember my father?

(Recited or sung)

“How’s your que dice today?”

Each morning my father

To my mother would say

Each early morning

As together they lay

“How’s your que dice today?”

### FEMALE 4

“How’s your que dice today?”

Early each morning

of every day

To all of us kids and all of his friends

Here’s what my father would say,

“How’s your que dice today?”

### MALE 4 AND FEMALE 4

So now, los estimados,

I say it to you,

“How’s your que dice today?”

“What chu know?” “ How’s it going?”

“How’s the world treating you?”

“How’s your que dice today?”

(Lights lower but not off.)

## Scene 2

## “Where Would I Like to Go”.

TIME: On a date in 1950’s High School.

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 AND MALE 4 sit on bench in half light. Light rises stage left on MALE 1 in T-shirt, jeans, motorcycle boots, and ducktails. FEMALE 1 with highschool letter jacket, crenoline skirt and penny loafers.

MALE 4

Remember how cool we were in high school. All ready to conquer the world.

FEMALE 4

I remember you wanting to get a motorcycle and run off to California.

MALE 4

A Harley, not just any motorcycle. But there was a new war and the draft and me and you.

MALE 1

(Looking at the moon)

Look at the half moon. I can’t believe we will have graduated by the time the moon is full.

FEMALE 1

(Takes his hand and looks at the moon)

High School days will be over.

(Looks up at her hero)

Dad wants me to go to college next fall. How about you? Have you thought about going to college? Or maybe tavelling to see the world?

MALE 1

(Looks into her eyes)

In two weeks I will be looking for work and dodging the draft. If I get drafted I guess I will see a lot of Korea and Japan.

FEMALE 1

(Takes his other hand and looks into his face)

(If you were going to see the world what would you like to see?

MALE 1

You ask where I would like to go.

Swim in the tropics?

Play in the snow?

I would like to dive Cancun,

study the ruins,

and walk the beach in the moon.

Or go off to the desert

to capture some snakes,

look at the cactus,

and walk the dry lakes.

Or look at the flowers

as we walk in the park,

hear rippling water and

the song of the lark.

Or fly to the north with the Eskimo

where the caribou wander

and there is plenty of snow.

I’m peripatetic but you must understand

I won’t go anyplace

I can’t hold your hand.

(They stare into each other’s eyes holding hands. Left lights fade).

## Scene 3

## “Morning on Cancun Beach”.

TIME: Next Morning.

At Rise: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 sit on bench. FEMALE 1 and MALE 1 walking to school with books. Left light rise.

### MALE 4

# Remember our graduation party plans?

### FEMALE 4

# Remember the chaperones?

### MALE 1

Guess what? My old man said I could go to Cancun with the group for graduation. You coming?

**FEMALE 1**

(Takes his arm)

My parents said “Ok” too. Isn’t that great?

**MALE 1 and FEMALE 1**

It is light enough to see a couple walking

hand in hand kicking an impertinent wave.

A sliver moon is talking

to the sun still behind the horizon in nights cave.

A lone pelican cruises the surf

while two tropicbirds circle for altitude.

A weak sun peeks through thin clouds

to see who is on its turf.

The pelican crashes into the sea

and surfaces with a pouch of food.

A bright orange sun disc burns through scud

and the orange reflection

appears upon the choppy flood

silhouetting the lone gliding pelican

and a couple looking at the sea

holding hands.

(They look at each other and continue off stage holding hands as left light falls.)

## Scene 4

## “I Love You Better When We’re Far Apart”.

TIME: A year later

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 shift position on the bench. Male 1 sitting with Male 2 drinking beer. Left lights rise.

### MALE 4

We didn’t get married right away and I joined the Air Force Reserve. Remember that Navy guy I told you about?

### FEMALE 4

# The one that loved her better when they were apart?

### MALE 1

So you girl dumped you and you signed up in the Navy. Pretty much the same for me except I picked the Air Force.

### Male 2

(Picks up guitar?)

We met down in the tropics where the dolphins play.

We fell in love and married on the very next day.

# When we got back to Texas you broke my very heart

and now I love you better when we’re far apart.

I’m stuck here in Texas with a broken heart

I guess I love you better when we’re far apart.

We got back together for one heck of a night

but ended up next morning in a heck of a fight

Now I am a daddy with a broken heart

but I still love you though we’re far apart

I’m stuck here in Texas with a broken heart

I guess I love you better when we’re far apart.

I’d like to be much closer so I could be a dad

but all of our fighting would just make him sad.

Tell him that I love him with all my broken heart

and that I love his mom much better when we’re far apart.

I’m stuck here in Texas with a broken heart

I guess I love you better when we’re far apart.

I’ll have to love you both while we’re far apart.

(Male 1 claps. Both rise and leave. Left lights fall.)

### Scene 5

### “Tia Juana Crossing”.

TIME: Three months later

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 get up and stretch. FEMALE 4 sits down. MALE 4 scratches an itch and sits down. MALE 1 tells MALE 2 about a border crossing. Left lights rise.

### MALE 4

# Did I ever tell you about a little trip to Mexico?

### FEMALE 4

No but it’s about time.

(Lighting changes from Female and Male 4 to Mame 1 and MALE 2)

### MALE 1

Today is the big day. We ship out for Thule. One year there freezing my butt off and I’m out. Then I can look for a real job. Last night we went T- town to enjoy a last warm night out.

I got off the bus from San Diego

and walked through customs

behind a newly married couple

We passed to the Mexican side

and were walking down the sidewalk

when they were accosted

by a local entrepreneur

who offered a variety of services.

He asked the lady

if she wanted to get married.

She grabbed he husbands arm,

smiled, and said they were married.

Then he asked the guy in a stage whisper

"Hey, Buddy. You want a divorce?"

You gotta give him credit.

He had something for everyone.

(They laugh and leave)

## Scene 6

## “A Call from Thule”.

TIME: Six months later.

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 still sitting in half light. Stage left spot lighted MALE 1 dressed in a parka sitting with a telephone receiver. Spot lighted Female 1 sits across the stage with telephone.

### MALE 1

Thule Greenland, near the top of the world

where almost everything is south,

gets kinda lonesome in the 24-hour night.

A guy gets depressed and down in the mouth.

To keep the troops happy and keep morale up

you get a free call home every week.

The signal first goes line-of-sight microwave

all the way up to P Mountains peak

Then the signal goes up to a satellite

22,000 mile above Peru

that sends it to the Goldstone receiver site

where there's still plenty to do.

The signal gets decoded, converted and such

then gets connected to a land line

for a five hundred mile trip

all in less than two seconds time.

Talking is just like in the sci-fi movies

where speech has a little delay

The reality is that you are talking

to someone almost 100,000 miles away.

Morale benefits from this new fangled stuff

like telephones and the satellite high up above

but between sunspots and other noise

the only word I understood was "love".

### FEMALE 1

I love you.

(Both hang up phones. Fade to black).

### Scene 7

### SUNS IN ORBIT

# TIME: Two years later

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 sit on bench. Male 2 and Female 2, a young professional couple sits talking. Left lights rise.

### MALE 4

Then I finally proposed.

### FEMALE 4

But if I had not grabbed you arm and said, “Let’s get married next week”, you would still be trying to figure out what you said.

### Male 2

In another young and boundless world

we swam in the surf and dried in the sun

nibbled sparkling salt crystals

from tanned flesh

rinsed in a rainwater pool

with gentle touches.

There was intensity

of the sun,

the touches,

the wonder of being young.

In another universe

on another night

the owl called through an open window.

We picked persimmons

On cool evenings in the fall

and moonlight made tan skin look alabaster.

Another pot of tea is brewing.

You are friend and lover

day and night

beginning and end.

FEMALE 2

(She take both his hands)

Lets drink the tea and turn out the light.

(Left lights fade)

## Scene 8

**(“Three Gallon Churn- A Cheapskates Valentine)**

TIME: Five years have past.

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 get up and stretch then sit on bench. FEMALE 2 and MALE 2 are looking at an old churn in an antique shop.

## MALE 4

(Mumbles) Ten-year anniversary.

### FEMALE 4

I remember an old cheapskate trying to weasel out of a box of candy.

## MALE 2

## (Left lights rise)

On Valentine's Day

we were poking through antique shops

holding hands and

making nostalgic comments in a whisper

when I found a priceless

brown Meyer three-gallon churn

(without lid and dasher)

A faint reflection in its dark brown glaze

showed us me as a child

on Saturday morning

sitting on a tall kitchen chair

with the cool churn between my bare feet

cool cream waiting to become butter.

I stroked the dasher up and down

and listened to *Let's Pretend* on the radio

hoping the butter would hurry

so I could get a cool glass of fresh buttermilk

and go out and play.

Two hundred dollars!!

Memories are worth a lot

but not for just an old brown pot.

( They walk off holding hands)

## 

## Scene 9

**(WELCOME HOME)**

TIME: Ten years later

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 change positions. A frustrated MALE 2 with a suit and brief case stands by the front door. FEMALE 2, a baby and kids screaming in the background on the other side of the door. Female has a sauce pan and a dish towel. Left light rise.

MALE 4

(Mumbles) Road warrior days. I sure missed them.

FEMALE 4

I missed them like a sore thumb.

(Lighting fades then highlights Male 2)

Male 2

I go for a week my fortune to seek

And now I feel I'd like a welcome home.

I get off of the plane in the sunshine or rain

And find I'm in the terminal all alone.

A hundred others disembark

like the emptying the Ark

three hundred wives and children,

friends and such.

Hugs, kisses and good news

welcome homes to chase the blues.

Hearty greetings make friends

glad they stayed in touch.

His arms around her waist,

little girl with happy face.

A cocktail party sound as they all confab.

So I walk down the long hall

in a light gray pall,

get my bags and go out to find a cab.

I ride home in a taxi.

The driver charges the max he

thinks I'll pay him for the ride.

The weather news is free.

That I'm home there is no doubt.

The porch light is burned out,

three newspapers lay in the grass

and the neighbor’s dog growls at me.

After a week at war

I walk in through the door

and get the welcome home with which I'm hexed.

Dented fender. Bad report card.

Stopped up sewer. Dug up yard.

I want to call the boss and find out when I'm leaving next.

Welcome home.

(He passes through the door as they gather around him. Left light fade.)

**Scene 10**

**Hooked (Twenty-fifth anniversary)**

TIME: twenty-five years later

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 sit on bench in din light. FEMALE 3 and MALE 3 sit on a sofa highlighted. He gives her a ring box as left light rise.

Female 3

(looks into the box)

Oh. Hon. Its beautiful. These 25 years just flew. I hope we have a hundred more.

Male 3

Twenty-five years ago I joined in a wedding.

We cast off with no course set,

not knowing where we were heading.

One thing was certain and can't be denied -

I was hooked on the bride.

A year or three later,

at least, more than one

We were just getting settled

when along came our son

It seems like yesterday.

The years they just flew.

I've been hooked on those two.

Time has flown, the smooth and the rough

I often wonder if I've done enough.

I know that, for my part, it’s been a good life.

I'm hooked on my wife.

FEMALE 3 brings up a champagne bottle and two glasses as left light fall

**Scene 11**

**(THE WALK)**

TIME: Another 20 years

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE 4 sit on a bench in the woods.

Female 3

Know what today is, Hon? Forty five years ago we left that little church and went running into the big wide world. And I still love you.

Male 3

It is mid afternoon on a fine fall day,

cloudy and humid after a quick shower.

Damp leaves muffled our footfalls.

A Bluejay screams in the distance.

An acorn falls shattering the heavy stillness.

We walked not speaking

holding hands where the path

is wide enough to walk side by side

to a log on the edge of a clearing.

We sat and watched a pair of Cardinals

Flit through the bare branches and thinning leaves.

Holding hands.

Memorizing worn knuckles

and scarred fingers,

warts and bluish veins.

We silently agreed it was time to return

along the silent path

through the half-light

holding hands.

(MALE 3 picks up her hand and kisses it. Left lights fade)

**Scene 12**

**(Lagoon Evening)**

TIME: 60 years have passed

AT RISE: FEMALE 4 and MALE sit in the spot light

Male 4

It would have been 60 short years today full of good memories. Fifty years of romance without the “L” word.

Waiting for the lobster to cook

we watched the sun set

behind the mangrove trees

in a short burst of color.

The silver sliver moon

trailed the setting sun by two hours

Both reflected off the lagoon

framed first by the orange glow

of reflected sunset

then by the black of night.

Two moons and

pina coladas

on Cancun.

Memories are painted just so.

FEMALE 4

You old fraud. I always knew you loved me.

(Previous characters pass behind them. Stage fades to black)

END END END