



# Just as I Thought

A Collection of Poetry 1995 – 2016

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## **SAMANTHA**

**MANY YEARS AGO I TAUGHT CREATIVE WRITING  
TO CHILDREN DURING SUMMERS ON CAPE COD  
LESSON FOR THIS DAY  
THINGS THAT GO AWAY AND COME BACK  
BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS  
SEASONS OF THE YEAR  
TIDES THAT LAPPED CAPE SHORES**

**THE CLASS SETTLED DOWN  
WROTE THEIR LINES AND FINALLY  
THE PENS AND PENCILS STOPPED  
LESSON NEARLY OVER**

**THEN TEN-YEAR OLD SAMANTHA  
BEAUTIFUL FRECKLED-FACED REDHEAD  
FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
CAME FORWARD AND RESTED HER HEAD  
ON MY SHOULDER, HER ARMS AROUND ME  
SAYING, "I'M GLAD YOU CAME BACK."**

**THUS ENDED THE LESSON  
WITH A FOREVER HUG**

## **THE LESSON**

**AS A BRAND NEW TEACHER  
I LOVED RECESS BEST OF ALL  
I SHARED THAT SPECIAL TIME OF DAY  
WITH THE FIRST GRADERS  
THE CHILDREN BECAME TEACHERS  
AND I JOINED THEIR CLASS**

**ONE MORNING WE SAT QUIETLY  
STUDYING A COLONY OF ANTS  
A PICTURE OF INDUSTRY  
FOR THOSE PRECIOUS MOMENTS  
AND BECAME OUR WORLD**

**UNTIL A SECOND GRADE BOY  
WITH A DEVILISH GLEAM IN HIS EYE  
SQUASHED ALL OF THEM WITH HIS FOOT**

**WE WERE AT A LOSS  
ONE LITTLE OBSERVER EXCLAIMED  
“HE DEADED THEM!”**

**THUS ENDED THE DAY’S LESSON**

## **MY BURDEN**

**THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR  
I HAD ASSIGNED AN ESSAY  
TO MY NEW NINTH GRADERS**

**THEIR FIRST EFFORT OF THE YEAR  
DEADLINE ARRIVED AS DID THE PAPERS  
AMONG THEM WAS ONE SO ILLEGIBLE  
IT SURELY CAUGHT MY EYE  
AND SLOWED MY READING TO A CRAWL**

**SO I RETURNED THE ESSAYS  
WHEN I CAME TO THE MESSY ONE  
I ASSURED THE OWNER  
I WOULD NOT STRUGGLE ALL YEAR  
WITH SUCH UNACCEPTABLE WORK**

**I CALLED A NAME AND THE BOY ANSWERED  
BY RAISING HIS WITHERED ARM  
THE BOY'S SMILING EYES  
BURNED A HOLE THROUGH ME  
THROUGH THE YEARS  
I HAVE BORNE THAT WITHERED LIMB**

## **WOODEN SCREEN DOORS**

**THEY DON'T MAKE 'EM ANY MORE  
WOODEN SCREEN DOORS  
THAT SWISH AND BANG AND CLATTER  
AND SPEAK ON SUMMER DAYS**

**HOMEMADE LEMONADE  
THE RAGMAN COMING  
CALLING RAGS FOR SALE  
THE ICEMAN DELIVERS  
BLOCKS OF WINTER PAST  
ORANGE POPSICLES  
THE GOOD HUMOR MAN**

**CHILDHOOD MEMORIES  
EVOKED BY WOODEN SCREEN DOORS**

**THEY DON'T MAKE 'EM ANY MORE**

## **A DEATH IN THE FAMILY**

**OUR WHIRLPOOL WONDER IS DYING  
I HAVE HEARD ITS GASPS  
AND ITS MORNING SPUTTER**

**THERE WERE DEATH RATTLES  
AN OLD FRIEND'S PARTING WORDS  
AFTER YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE**

**ITS INNARDS ARE TIRED  
WORN BY REMOVING KETCHUP STAINS  
AND BARBECUE SMEARS ON NAPKINS  
GRUNGY BEGRIMED SWEATSHIRTS**

**ALL THIS TIME I TOOK IT FOR GRANTED  
IT NEVER COMPLAINED OR  
DEMANDED OVERTIME PAY**

**DAY IN DAY OUT IT SPUN  
SOAPED AND RINSED TO PERFECTION  
NOW ITS TIME HAS COME**

**IT'S OFF TO THE GREAT LAUNDROMAT  
UP IN THE SKY  
OUR WHIRLPOOL WONDER**

## **LITTLE RASCAL**

**IN MY GROWING GENTLER YEARS  
I SHUNNED THE GOODY GOODY IMAGE  
I CRAVED THE VILLAIN'S ROLE**

**AS A FIVE YEAR OLD, MY TIME CAME  
OF ALL PLACES...KINDERGARTEN  
MIRACULOUSLY I PROCURED A WEAPON  
A SHINY LETHAL LOOKING KNIFE**

**TRUTH BE TOLD  
IT WAS JUST A RUBBER REPLICA  
BUT IN MY NASTY LITTLE PAWS  
IT FELT JUST RIGHT  
IT WAS JUST THE SORT OF ITEM  
TO DRIVE INNOCENT LITTLE FEMALE CLASSMATES  
TO BLOOD CURDLING SHRIEKS AND TEARS  
WHAT A GREAT GAME IT WAS  
FOR A SINISTER FLEDGLING HUNTER**

**EACH DAY AT RECESS TIME  
I RACED OUT TO THE PLAYGROUND  
WHEN I CORNERED A VICTIM  
I SCREAMED I'M GONNA GETCHA**

**WHAT GREATER JOY FOR A YOUNG LAD  
TO SEND GIRLS CRINGING CRYING  
UNTIL ONE TERRIBLE INFORMER  
SNITCHED TO THE AUTHORITIES**

**MY SENTENCE WAS A WEEK'S DETENTION**

**THE YEARS HAVE PASSED  
BUT STILL I MISS THE RUSH, THE POWER  
YET I REMAIN.....UNREPENTANT**



## **A DAY AT THE FAIR**

**ON A DAY AT THE FAIR  
WITH A GIRL SO PERFECT  
A CENTERFOLD IN WAITING  
NEVER IN MY FOURTEEN YEARS  
COULD I BELIEVE MY GOOD FORTUNE**

**“LET’S GO ON THE WHIRLIGIG,” SAID SHE  
IN A TRANCE I FOLLOWED**

**WE SHARED A SMALL CAR  
SHE SAT BEHIND ME  
CUDDLED AGAINST ME  
THOSE PERFECT BREASTS  
PRESSED AGAINST MY BACK**

**WE SPUN AND WHIRLED  
AS I IN ECSTASY  
I WAS CATATONIC**

**NOT ONLY GUILTY OF LOVE  
BUT OF PURE TEEN AGE LUST  
TOO SOON THE MOMENT PASSED  
BUT THE MEMORY ...**

**A REAL HUMDINGER**

## LOVE'S DILEMMA

FOURTEEN YEARS OLD  
AND IN LOVE  
HOPELESSLY IN LOVE  
WITH A BLOND DIMPLED GIRL

HOLDING HER AT SCHOOL DANCES  
GLIDING ACROSS THE CLOUDS  
JUST ONE THING MISSING

THE GOODNIGHT KISS

PAINFULLY HOW OFTEN  
I THOUGHT OF THAT MOMENT  
MY LIPS TOUCHING HERS  
HEART POUNDING, EYE CLOSED

BUT SHY BASHFUL ME  
LACKED THE COURAGE OF MY DESIRES

BUT TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT  
I CAN DO IT, I CAN DO IT, I CAN DO IT

I CAN'T DO IT

POSTSCRIPT: FINALLY I RECEIVED THE KISS AT MY  
50<sup>TH</sup> HIGH SCHOOL REUNION.

## **SCRUFFY**

**MY LITTLE DOG IS GROWING OLD  
SHE SLEEPS MORE THESE DAYS  
THERE ARE NO MORE LONG RUNS ON THE BEACH**

**SOMETIMES SHE NEEDS A BOOST TO BOARD THE  
CAR  
BUT THERE IS STILL LOVE IN HER EYES  
SHE GROWS SLOWER BUT MORE ATTACHED TO US  
I GROW IMPATIENT WITH HER MANY TRIPS TO THE  
DOOR**

**SHE IS GROWING OLD  
LIKE ALL OF US  
A LITTLE FRIGHTENED  
A LITTLE LESS SURE OF HERSELF**

**BUT WHEN SHE HOPS UP ON MY LAP  
AND RESTS HER HEAD AGAINST MY CHEST  
I LOOK INTO HER EYES OF LOVE  
AND KNOW WE ARE GROWING OLD  
TOGETHER**

### **JETER #3**

**SOMETIMES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT  
I LIE AWAKE AND LISTEN  
THERE IS A SOFT HUMMING  
AND THE GENTLEST OF SNORES**

**FROM ANOTHER LAND  
IT IS MY DOG JETER DREAMING  
PERHAPS HE'S RUNNING TO THE BEACH  
OR PLAYING TAG WITH HIS PUP PAL  
BAILEY WHO LIVES NEXT DOOR**

**JETER TALKS IN WHISPERS  
AND IN SHADOWS FROM A DISTANCE**

**THERE IS PEACE AND CALM IN THIS PLACE  
HIS PRESENCE IS FOR ME  
A PILLOW I REST MY HEART ON**

**I KNOW HE IS NEAR  
AND HE KNOWS I AM NEAR  
AND THAT IS ENOUGH**



**AS ONE**

**THE LITTLE BOY SITS ALONE  
LOST IN HIS DREAM WORLD  
SHROUDED IN A SILENT CLOUD  
OF DOWNS SYNDROME  
TILL A BLONDE LABRADOR RETRIEVER  
CAUTIOUSLY APPROACHES THE BOY**

**THE BOY STARES AT THE VISITOR  
LIKE A UNSOLVED MYSTERY  
A NEW SIGHT FOR HIS NAÏVE EYES**

**GENTLY TENTATIVELY THE DOG  
TOUCHES THE CHILD'S HAND  
BEAUTY ON BEAUTY**

**SHYLY THE CHILD RESPONDS  
CARESSING THE LAB'S VELVETY EARS  
A DANCE OF UNLIKELY PARTNERS**

**A HOLY COMMUNION**

## WITHHELD LOVE

BEING TEMPORARILY OUT OF LOVE,  
AN INTRUDER VISITED US LAST WEEK.  
A LABRADOR RETRIEVER STOPPED BY,  
AND SPYING THREE DANCING CHILDREN,  
THE DOG PRANCED INTO THEIR HEARTS  
CASUALLY, JUST THE WAY LOVE BEGINS.

WHEN I CAME HOME, I DISCOVERED THE  
HAPPY FOURSOME  
AND HESITATED JOINING THEIR COMPANY,

FOR I KNEW BETTER.....  
OLDER, WISER.....FEARFUL  
I WITHHELD THE LOVE I MEANT TO GIVE  
FOR I'D LIVED LONG ENOUGH  
TO KNOW THE FRAGILE HEART

AND SURE ENOUGH, TWO DAYS LATER  
THE ORPHAN'S OWNER CALLED ON US  
TO RECLAIM HIS WANDERER.  
SO DIFFICULT FOR THREE YOUNG GIRLS  
TO LEARN THE WAY OF LIFE AND LOVE.....

THEY GAVE ONE LAST HUG  
AND RETREATED TO THE HOUSE  
TO HIDE THEIR QUIET TEARS

I RETURNED TO MY EVENING PAPER.....  
NO TEARS TO SHED  
JUST THE EMPTINESS  
FROM NOT HAVING GIVEN MY LOVE.



### **THE TOOTH FAIRY**

**AS I SAT LAZING BY THE POOL  
A CHILD STOPPED BY TO VISIT  
SHE PERCHED ON MY KNEE**

**SHE WAS JUST FIVE YEARS OLD  
WHEN TEETH COME AND GO ON A WHIM  
SHE SMILED AND POKED A FINGER  
AT A SMALL GAP EXACTLY  
IN THE MIDDLE OF HER MOUTH  
“IT’S BROKEN,” SHE EXCLAIMED**

**WE TALKED OF TOOTH FAIRIES  
AND THE ECONOMICS INVOLVED**

**“WHAT IS BROKEN ON YOU?” SHE ASKED  
WHERE DO I BEGIN???  
I ALMOST CONFESSED, “MY HEART”**

**BUT FOR A YOUNG CHILD  
SOME THINGS CAN WAIT**

**SHE SMILED AGAIN  
A RADIANT GAP-TOOTHED SMILE  
AND I WAS FIVE AGAIN  
IN LOVE WITH THE WORLD**

## **SIGNS OF LOVE**

**A MOST UNUSUAL WEDDING  
BOTH BRIDE AND GROOM  
WERE UNABLE TO HEAR OR SPEAK**

**THE MINISTER STOOD AND LED THEM  
IN THEIR VOWS OF LOVE  
WHILE AN INTERPRETER  
REPEATED IN SIGN LANGUAGE  
FOR MANY IN ATTENDANCE WERE PART OF THE  
THEIR SILENT WORLD**

**THE GRACE OF THE WOMAN'S SIGNS  
GAVE ADDED MEANING  
TO THEIR SILENT VOWS**

**AND THEN FOR THE HEARING  
THE SOLOIST SANG  
OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT  
THE COUPLE FOCUSED ON THE HANDS**

**NOT OFTEN  
IS LOVE SO VISIBLE**



## **ARGYLE AFFAIR**

**IN MY COLLEGE DAYS  
A PRETTY COED  
KNITTED ME ONE ARGYLE SOCK  
JUST ONE  
MATELESS  
WHEN SHE GAVE IT**

**SHE PROMISED ANOTHER**

**A SOLE MATE**

**BUT THE LOVE AFFAIR FADED  
LIKE A FIRE THAT DIED  
FOR THE LACK OF ANOTHER LOG**

**YEARS PASSED  
SEVEN PRESIDENTS CAME  
AND WENT**

**THE SOCK LAY IN A DRESSER DRAWER  
ALONE  
UNTIL ONE DAY IT WAS GONE  
JUST DISAPPEARED**

**GONE**

**IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL ARGYLE  
BUT ALAS, IT WAS GONE**

**A ONE-SOCK ROMANCE**

## GORDON

OUR LAST NIGHT IN ENGLAND  
AFTER A YEAR AWAY FROM HOME  
I'D PROMISED TO MEET GORDON  
ONE FINAL TIME AT THE WHITE LION

LAST MINUTE DETAILS DELAYED ME  
WHEN I ARRIVED QUITE LATE  
GORDON WAS SITTING THERE  
WEARING A CROOKED GRIN

"SORRY I'M LATE, GORDON" I SAID  
GORDON JUST SMILED AND REPLIED  
"RICHARD, YOU SAID YOU'D BE HERE  
SO I KNEW YOU'D BE HERE."

LATER AFTER A PINT  
ONE LAST HUG  
AND THEN GOODBYE

ON SUNDAY A FEW WEEKS LATER  
OUR TELEPHONE RANG  
FROM THREE THOUSAND MILES AWAY  
IT WAS GORDON

"I JUST TOOK MITZI FOR A WALK.  
WHEN I GOT HOME I TURNED ON THE TELLY  
THE BOSTON SYMPHONY WAS PLAYING

RICHARD, AREN'T YOU NEAR BOSTON?"

"YES, GORDON, IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?"

"YES, RICHARD, I JUST CALLED TO TELL YOU  
I LOVE YOU."

## LOVE

DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS  
LOVERS HAVE CARVED THEIR MARK  
ON ROUGH HEWN BARK OF TREES

SO I IN LOOKING BACK  
OF LOVES I CONFESSED SECRETLY  
IN MY TIMID HEART  
GATHERED IN MY HEART OF HEARTS

NO JACKKNIFE TO A TREE  
DID I TAKE

YET SURELY  
THE SHARPEST KNIFE  
IN ALL THE LAND  
HAD LEFT ITS MARK  
KNOWN ONLY TO ME

DO YOU SUPPOSE  
THE GIRLS HAVE WOUNDS  
AS DEEP  
AS PAINFUL  
AS BEAUTIFUL

## **MY HEART**

**I'VE TOLD MY HEART  
LIGHTEN UP**

**LIFE'S TOO SHORT  
TO LET WOUNDS FESTER  
TO PUT PAST INJURIES TO REST  
LET THE SCARS HEAL  
WHY KEEP THEM ALIVE**

**THEY, LIKE ME, GROW OLD  
PERHAPS LOSE THEIR EDGE**

**WHY IS IT  
WE KEEP SHARPENED KNIVES  
IN OUR HEARTS**

## LETTING GO

MY FRIEND LIES DYING  
HER BED A WAITING TOMB  
THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE EYES  
ONCE FULL OF LIFE AND LOVE  
STARE WEAKLY UP AT ME

THE DAFFODILS SHE ONCE TENDED  
LONG FOR THE TOUCH OF HER HAND

THE CARDINAL WILL FLIT 'CROSS THE YARD  
UNAWARE OF THE MYSTERY  
OF WHAT LIVES BEYOND

THIS DAY I HAVE NO GIFT TO OFFER  
NO ANSWER TO HER SUFFERING  
JUST MY SILENT WISH TO END HER AGONY

THIS IS THE NOT THE FRIEND I KNEW  
JUST A SHELL

CLINGING TO THE REMNANTS OF A JOYFUL LIFE  
TRULY I COULD NOT WISH HER ONE MORE DAY

ONLY A PRAYER  
WHEN LETTING GO  
BECOMES AN EMBRACE

## **TOGETHER.....APART**

**THE HUSBAND WAS A SNORER  
NOT REALLY A NUISANCE,  
BUT MAYBE A LITTLE BIT**

**SO THE LOVING BUT LIGHT SLEEPING WIFE  
ALWAYS RETIRED TO HER OWN BEDROOM**

**YET COME DAYBREAK THEY WERE AS ONE  
FRIENDS, SWEETHEARTS, LOVERS**

**THROUGH THE YEARS  
THE HUSBAND'S GENTLENESS  
BROUGHT WARMTH AND COMFORT  
TO HIS FAITHFUL WIFE**

**COMMON TASKS WERE SHARED  
AT THE SUPERMARKET  
TOGETHER THEY PUSHED THEIR CARRIAGE  
LOADED WITH THEIR SHARED FAVORITES  
EVEN ON SOME OCCASIONS  
THEY FINISHED EACH OTHER'S SENTENCES**

**THEY LOVED TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW  
AT THE IMPATIENS THEY PLANTED  
AND THUS THEY LIVED  
LIFE, IN LOVE  
LIKE CUPPED SPOONS**

**UNTIL.....**

**ONE BLISTERY WINTER MORNING  
THE HUSBAND STEPPED OUT  
FOR HIS RITUAL RUN  
TILL HIS HEART STOPPED**

**LATER THE POLICE FOUND HIM SLUMPED IN A  
SNOWDRIFT**

**THE WIFE, AS ONE CAN IMAGINE  
WAS SHOCKED, STUNNED, BEREFT**

**THAT SAME NIGHT  
SHE LEFT HER OWN BED  
TO LIVE IN THE HUSBAND'S  
COMFORTED BY HIS ESSENCE**

**APART.....YET TOGETHER**

**FOR MICHAEL  
...AND CREVICE HIS CAT**

**THE LITTLE CAT IS LOST  
ALONE IN THIS WORLD  
FOR HIS MASTER HAS LEFT  
LEFT TOO SOON  
FAR TOO SOON**

**THE MASTER SNATCHED FROM EARTH  
IN A BREATHELESS MOMENT  
A MOMENT TOO OFT REMEMBERED  
SEARED INTO THE HEARTS  
OF THOSE HE LEFT BEHIND**

**SO NOW EACH MORNING  
THE CAT GOES OUT THE BACK DOOR  
AND PADS TO THE WOODPILE  
WHERE ONCE HIS MASTER  
SPLIT AND NEATLY STACKED THE LOGS  
TO WARM HEART AND HEARTH**

**THE CAT SEEKS OUT THE WOODPILE  
FOR IT HOLDS A SECRET  
DEEP IN THE STACKS  
IS A REMNANT...  
THE STUB OF ITS MASTER'S CIGAR**

**IT HOLDS THE STUB TWIX TINY PAWS  
AND NUZZLES IT WITH WHISKERED NOSE  
RECALLING SMALL MOMENTS  
MOMENTS SHARED**

**LOVE'S SECRETS ARE INFINITE**

**POSTSCRIPT: MICHAEL, THE SON OF A GOOD  
FRIEND, DIED AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER. HIS  
CAT CREVICE MISSED HIM TOO. I WROTE THIS  
POEM FOR GAIL, MICHAEL'S MOTHER.**

## AT A LOSS

ONE CALM SEPTEMBER MORNING  
AN OLD FRIEND WALKED A FARAWAY SHORE  
WAVES SPARKLED BENEATH THE SUN  
JUST ANOTHER DAY OF THE SWEEP OF YEARS

WHILE I, AT HOME, HUNG WALLPAPER  
TO BRIGHTEN A TIRED ROOM  
I ONLY WANTED TO IMPROVE THE VIEW  
IN THIS PART OF MY WORLD, MY OWN  
UNMINDFUL OF DISTANT SHORE AND WAVES

BUT SUDDENLY TIME STOPPED  
A FATAL HEART ATTACK FOR A FRIEND  
DROPPED IN IN THE WARM SAND

UNAWARE, HAPPY IN MY PAPERING  
I CONTINUED MY CHORE  
AND NOW THE ROOM IS GOOD AS NEW  
IT HAS A CHEERFUL LOOK

SOMETIMES IGNORANCE IS BLISS

IF EVEN FOR AN HOUR, A DAY  
BUT, STILL  
I MISS MY FRIEND





## HOME WAKE

THE FATHER'S BODY LAY AT REST  
IN THE OPEN COFFIN BY THE WINDOW

THE NEW WIDOW AND THE THREE SONS  
SHARED THE SILENT, SOMBER HOUSE  
FOR THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS

FRIENDS AND RELATIVES STOPPED  
TO SHARE THEIR GRIEF  
FOR A LOSS SO TRAGIC  
A MAN DYING BEFORE HIS TIME

AND THE YOUNGEST SON  
PARADED BACK AND FORTH  
BEFORE THE FATHER'S BODY  
CHANTING, "HE'S NOT DEAD,  
HE'S COMING BACK.  
HE'S NOT DEAD,  
HE'S COMING BACK."

CASTING OFF THE CURSE OF DEATH  
THE INNOCENT CHILD  
DEFYING THE DARK MYSTERY

OF LIFE AND DEATH  
A MYSTERY HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND  
PERHAPS.....