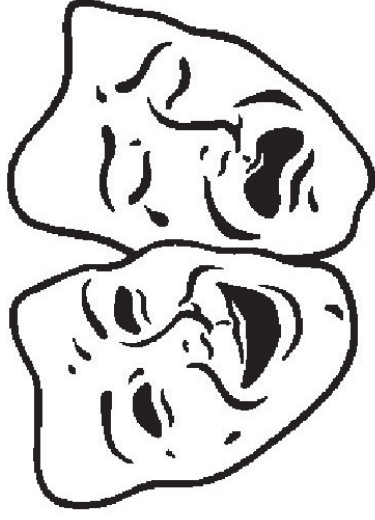


Rhymes and Poems



Leonard Yarbrough

Table of Contents

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
ELLEN.....	3
CHIAROSCURO.....	4
KALEIDOSCOPE.....	5
THE ENGINEER.....	6
VAL-DE-REI.....	7
WHAT IS A MAN?.....	8
COSMIC JOKE.....	9
PAEAN.....	10
THE WATCHER.....	12
MY LADY.....	14
WANDERING.....	15
HEZEKIAH.....	16
GOOD OLE BOYS.....	17
THE SCOUT.....	18
POLITICALLY CORRECT.....	19
MY HOME TOWN.....	20
EACH DAY.....	21
THE PROVOST.....	22
MY ANGEL.....	23
BLIND MAN'S WALK.....	24
DOWNTOWN.....	25
THE LEARNED RASCALS.....	26
CALL OF THE OPEN ROAD.....	27
THE VACANT ROOM.....	28
LAZARUS.....	29
GRACE.....	30
TEARS.....	31
A TEACHER'S LAMENT.....	32
THE OLD MAN.....	33
THE LAND OF NOD.....	34
NO ANSWERS.....	35
TO CHELSEA.....	36
MY BUDDY.....	37
THREE ROSES.....	38
TWO HEARTS.....	39
NOT NEEDED.....	40
BIRTHSTONE.....	41
TURTLES AND FROGS AND LITTLE TADPOLES.....	43
THE COVERED BRIDGE.....	44
MY LAST LOVE.....	45
FARAWAY PLACES.....	46

Faraway Places

Over the mountains and across the seas, I want to see the places which I've not seen. Whether the Hebrides or the Taj Mahal, There are so many places I have not been.	
I'd like to visit Tasmania and Myanmar, too; View a sunset from the coast of Mandalay, Sail around Malaysia, and scale Kilimanjaro, And await the morning sun at St. Francis Bay.	
Over the mountains and across the seas, I want to see the places where I've not been: Down to far-off Ushuaia, and up the Andes See Pica Machu, Titicaca and Chichi Itzen.	
I'd like to land on a lonely Pacific isle; See the Forbidden City, and the Great Wall; Visit Mt. Ararat, and make my way up the Nile, With the Aegean Isles my next ports of call.	
Over the mountains and across the seas, I want to see the places where I've not been: The Roman Fountains, and the Champs-Elysees, Visit the Lorelei, and stroll 'neath the Linden trees.	
I'd like to stop in at the Hermitage; Ride the train from Moscow to Ussuri Bay, Sail across the Bering to a lone Eskimo village, Head for Vancouver, with a stop at Courtenay.	
Over the mountains and across the seas, I want to see the places which I've not seen: All the scenes and sights I've dreamed about, And then remember all the places I have been.	

Faraway Places, © Leonard Yarbrough, 2016

My Last Love

I was lonely and out of sorts,
Existing quietly, without
In the years of my decline.

And then one dreary day
Most unexpectedly, oddly,
I met a lady so fine.

Quiet, almost demure she is;
With a sweet temperament
And she is so lovely.

I thought I was being foolish.
I'm older, far fewer days than she.
What must she think of me?

We chatted about this and that.
I rattled on, blathered and rambled.
I really believed I was a fool.

She is so kind and as I spoke,
My hand she took and held close.
Whispered softly, You're cool.

Lucky is someone like I
Who finds his perfect mate;
Lucky am I, it can't be wrong.

I like her very much,
And she says the same to me.
We agree, we fit, we belong.

My Last Love, © Leonard Yarbrough, 2013

Ellen

Ellen was my first love, a long time ago.
I lost her then, why or how I do not know.
We grew up and lost touch with each other;
She became another's wife and a mother.

I finally settled down and raised a family,
Built myself a career and, I cannot deny,
I let my marriage die, that was a shame.
But then I was unwise, and I was to blame.

Then one Spring day, much to my surprise,
Came another Ellen, one day at moonrise.
She was not the like the first Ellen, not her.
The first was serene; this one passion and fire.

But one day, for no reason, rash words flew.
She was angry, hurt, upset, and I knew,
That once again a beloved Ellen I had lost,
And once more I knew how great the cost.

So here I am, sad, tired, living all alone.
I was selfish, cold, with a heart of stone.
Not at all the man I should have been,
But I wasn't, I was foolish, rash, and mean.

Often, late at night, in the dark and quiet
I often wonder if Ellen thinks of me yet,
But for all my musings, all said and done,
I know that my Ellen is gone, gone, gone.

- Ellen © Leonard Yarbrough, 1996

Blue Jay

Blue Jay, Blue Jay, sittin' on a rail.
Blue Jay, Blue Jay why do you wail?
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, where have you been?
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, who's your kin?

Blue Jay, Blue Jay, answer me true
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, how do you do?
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, aren't you afraid?
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, are your debts paid?

Blue Jay, Blue Jay, up in a tree.
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, what do you see?
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, picking at a limb.
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, singing a hymn.

Blue Jay, Blue Jay, sittin' on a rail.
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, stay out of jail.
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, fly away home.
Blue Jay, Blue Jay, where do you roam?

Blue Jay © Leonard Yarborough 2016

The Covered Bridge

While traveling down an old country road one day
I drove through a little valley beyond a small ridge.
The road dipped under a canopy of tall trees,

And there, all at once, was an old covered bridge.
Its tin roof was unpainted, dirty, streaked with rust,
The planks were warped, mossy, weathered and gray,
And beneath it was a deep pool, fed by a burbling creek
Flowing beneath the bridge, no doubt day after day.

I paused in my journey there and looked all around
At all the trees — alder, oak, hickory, pine, and ash.
How quiet and peaceful it was, what little sound there was
Was that of the stream as it met the pool with a splash.
I had no camera, no paints, not a thing with which to
Capture a picture of this quaint and restful scene;
And I struggled for words to fix firmly into my mind
This unexpected old covered bridge that I had just seen.

What stories does it have to tell, I wondered to myself,
About the men who made it and crossed it every day?
Who were they — these hardy men and their families, old
And young, who surely often came along this rural highway?
Who stopped here to wonder about this old bridge?
Why it was here; who built it; how it came to be made?
And how many swam here in the hot days of summer?
How many stopped for a time simply to rest in its shade?

How well could I depict the peaceful scene before me?
I considered it as I would an unforgettable dream.
What words could describe this place so well, with its
Old covered bridge, the little valley and running stream?
I did not want it to fade away, in the way dreams do.
I sought the words and phrases to put into rhyme,
That would make a word picture of this serene place,
For I knew I had to keep this scene always in my mind.

I tarried much too long; for the night was approaching.
The shadows deepened and then faded away all too soon.
As I watched, there was nothing to be seen but the puny
Light of the flickering stars and that of a rising full moon.
I had a last glimpse of that bucolic site, lying so quiet,
Indelibly burned into my mind there in the moonlight,
The old bridge, its small valley, and the tumbling creek.
And then, I turned away and slowly drove into the night.

The Covered Bridge, © Leonard Yarborough 2013

Turtles and Frogs and Little Tadpoles

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
Tracks in the mud and a lost feather
From some old bird lying there.
It's a peaceful spot, here in the shade
Under the limbs of an old beech tree.

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
The smell of honeysuckle is in the air;
The day is warm, clouds are puffy.
The locust sings, and the old crow caws,
While June bugs buzz around a tree.

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
I come to this place often now;
It used to be seldom that I did.
Many things have happened, and many
Are the things that I could have done.

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
Skittering minnows, waterdogs too.
An old Blue heron flaps slowly by,
Ignoring all as if to say to one and all,
What are you doing out in the sun?

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
The splash of a playful fish disturbs
the calmness of the pond and then
Everything settles down into a quiet.
Only a moment, for soon I must run.

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
Tracks in the mud and the smell of hay
Fills the air as the cows next door
Head for the barn at the end of the day,
And fireflies begin their mating dance.

Turtles and frogs, and little tadpoles
Honeysuckles vines and muscadines
Hang heavy on the vine, waiting for
The picking, making into jelly and wine.
What fool thinks this all is by chance?
Turtles and Frogs. © Leonard Yarbrough 2010

Cfhiatoscuro

When I am all alone, and I have nobody, no one at all,
There is a dark clarity in wanting to be freed of my shell
And from knowing everything is ordained to be dismal,
Can't someone out there hear me when I cry, when I call?
Is there someone to aid me, comfort me, hold me, free me
From this melancholy that binds me close, keeps me unfree.
The world is dim, dark, and I am fearful, seeking release,
Praying for courage, and for a faith that will not cease.

- **Cfhiatoscuro** © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

Kaleidoscope

Look out there, my friend, tell me what do you see?
See the sparkling jewels there, don't they look like you and me,
Beckoning, sparkling, forming lovely patterns along the way?
You can see them early in the morning dew or late in the day.
I never saw them before, for I was blind, confused, and in a daze,
Then a very wise man once said to me, you think life is just a haze.
But it's not, you've lost your focus, forgot who you are, what you be.
Look around, there's nothing to do, call yourself forth, you're free.
And I saw, I saw that he was right. We are each one a jewel, a gift
To be polished, burnished, until we shine with our own inner light.
Which we do, as a kaleidoscope, shining and ever changing.
Take heart, smile and remember life is given for living, loving,
Caring, sharing, and perhaps more. I cannot be certain of more
Than this, I once thought I knew, and thought that life was a bore.
I erred in my thinking, for I now know that life is not about me or you.
Instead, life is about how we can attain grace as we do what we do;
It is a gift, and when my spirit is low, I take time to look out there.
There are jewels around, out in the sun, lying there, everywhere.

-Kaleidoscope, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

My Old Dog

My old dog and I are quite alike.
We do not move as well as we used to.
Our joints are stiff, our limbs are weak.
We are content to rest more than to do.

My old dog and I are very much alike;
We both prefer to bask in the sun.
And we don't move so well anymore,
We had rather sit in the shade than run.

My old dog and I dream of the past.
We recall when we were more curious.
We wandered the fields, looking,
Seeking, hunting, and seldom serious.

Now we watch the clouds in the sky,
And we scratch an itch if we have to.
That's about all we can do now,
And we seldom want anything to do.

We don't travel very far any more.
We're too old to move very fast.
Still, we remember the good times,
When we were young, back in the past.

My old dog and I are quite alike.
Lazing around now is our notion of fun,
Thinking of all the good times we had,
As we grow older basking in the sun.

Bury the two of us together, if you will.
We'll mosey across the Great Divide,
Seeing what we can see, two old ones
Who've lived their lives quite satisfied.

My Old Dog © Leonard Yarbrough 2009.

Birthstone

My woman's birthstone is the fiery Opal,
Torn from the mother Earth at its birth.
Full of fire and in repose the hue of milk
That flows from her breasts to nurture
The man child who lies in her arms,
Dreaming there against skin of silk.

Opal is her birthstone, full of fire as she,
The color of white clouds hovering in the sky
Like her stone, she rests in serenity.
And when engaged, fully so, lightning bolts
Cannot match her courage or her passion.
She is my woman for all eternity.

One Opal for her hand, one on a chain
Two more for her ears, do I adorn her.
Gifts from her man, a man who knows
That she is my true mate for life, and
We two have become one so completely.
She is mine, I am hers, and it shows.

Fire and milk, flame and breast, my mate.
I pray that she may forever be kept safe
From peril, knowing that she will take
Risks more than most mortals, that is her way,
As she rights a wrong, or comforts a child,
I love her. I sacrifice myself, for her sake.

I give these Opals to my Woman, to wear.
They show very well my gift from God
That He has given this once proud man
Who hears the wisdom sent from above.
Dear Lord, guide her, keep her safe
And always hold her in your hand.

The Opals are for my Woman, my true mate.
Given in love, of love, and for love.
Full of fire, yet signifying calm and rest.
By the grace of God I am hers, she is mine.
When we are apart, she knows when I think
Of her. We are content. We are blessed.

Birthstone © Leonard Yarbrough 2005

The Engineer

A shy, quiet man is he, although he can be loud and boisterous,
No stranger to the arcane magic that others view as mysterious,
That stuff we call science and mathematics and other such things
That we cannot fathom, even if we accept what each of them brings.

He is not so good being with others unless they be such as he -
Perhaps it is because he imagines things others of us cannot see -
Or maybe it is because deep down he considers us all beneath him.
I don't know, nor do I care, for he is after all a modern jinn.

Bridges, buildings, marvelous tools, toys, even an airplane -
He conceives, designs, builds, tests, and perhaps builds again.
Striving for perfection, failure is but a nuisance to be pulled apart,
As he painstakingly creates for us the benefits of his arcane art.

I once dreamed of being like him, for I wanted to be able to know
All the things that I thought that such a man as he must show
Mastery over, and the ways of controlling those mysterious forces
That gives him such power, and I wanted control over those sources.

Now I too am an engineer, and I have become what I dreamed to be.
I, too, am quiet, for I realize now the responsibility given to me,
Should I fail to do my craft well, be careless, omit a small detail, then
Others could be harmed, or die, and this is the engineer's greatest sin.

- **The Engineer** © Leonard Yarbrough, 1996

Val-de-rei

I do not know where I will go, but this I do know -
I'll venture with a song in my heart, a smile on my face,
Taking time to look and to muse, to hink a bit; and so
I'll go see the world, hopping to make it a better place.

There is so much to be gained in being a true friend.
I am fortunate that I can be and that I do all that I can.
Lending a hand, being a man upon whom others depend.
And when my life is done, they can say, "There went a man."

No, I don't want riches or costly possessions or even fame,
These are not why I travel, seldom lingering, on the go.
Life is a grand adventure, a joy, a mystery, and only a game
That I play, whatever its purpose, perhaps I'll never know.

Once I believed I couldn't make a difference in the world.
Once I was steeped in self-pity, despair, to my great shame.
Then someone, I never knew his name, a vision unfurled,
Showed me that it's my life to live, no one else is to blame.

No one else, for only I can account for each deed and word
And for each sin, too, for I have not always been my best,
As I have gone on and when I forgot my goal and erred.
So I'll move on, seeking, wondering, until finally I rest.

- *Val-de-rei*, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1996

Not Needed

There he sits, all alone with his memories.
Once, he was involved, greatly sought.
Many called for his knowledge and skill,
And many were those whom he taught.

He accomplished many daring things,
Large projects, some small, he had done.
Now, there is nothing for him to do
Except sit alone there out in the sun.

Oh, he can still think, he is not infirm,
His clasp is strong, he has his wits,
Except in the eyes of those who decide
Such matters. And so alone there he sits.

What do you think about, that old man?
Are you bitter and perhaps angry, too?
Are you lonely, out there in the sun?
Do you yet dream of things to do?

There he sits, quite all alone in the sun.
Perhaps he thinks of his past deeds.
Perhaps he plans of things yet to do.
Or perhaps he just sits with no needs.

Not Needed, © Leonard Yarbrough 2005

Two Hearts

Two hearts beating as one, though far apart.
Two hearts beating as one, spanning across space
Two hearts beating as one in spite of the fates
Two hearts beating as one, and I long for your face.

How do our hearts beat as one, I ask the sky?
How does this happen when we are far away?
How can I keep my love from crumbling into dust?
How will I find the strength to face each day?

I call upon my faith to keep our hearts beating as one.
I ask the gods for their favor, I pledge to them my life
To keep us together while we are separated by distance.
Nothing more can I do, for I shall have her as my wife.

Two hearts beating as one, though we are far apart.
Two hearts beating as one, spanning across space;
Two hearts beating as one, in spite of the fates
Two hearts beating as one as I reach for your face.

We are the blessed, we are beloved one for the other.
We have always dared reach for love, and it is said
We have kept the faith, maintained our shrine of love.
We have wept, wondered, and now will go on to wed.

Two hearts beating as one, for we are never far apart.
Two hearts beating as one, spanning across space;
Two hearts beating as one, in spite of the fates
Two hearts beating as one, as I reach to touch your face.

Two Hearts © Leonard Yarbrough 2004

What is a Man?

One day as I was working all alone on some old thing in my shop
My son came running by, and all at once he came to a stop.
He watched me at work for awhile, and then he raised his hand.
And then he spoke to me, asking, Father, just what is a man?
I'm a small boy, I do not understand what it means or what I am
Tell me truly, will I grow up to be a man or must I always be small?
O, Father, I do not know, please can you tell me anything at all?

I was taken aback, for this was a question I hadn't expected
Not then, not for many years, and I had not all expected
This question from my son, and yet I knew I must say to him
Something he could hold and know, nothing said at a whim.
But what is a man? I had pondered that question myself often
And to little avail, for though I thought much, I still didn't know.
And I looked at my son, standing there, waiting to hear what's so.

My son, I'll tell you truly, I don't know if I know what is a man.
But sit you down here by me, and I'll tell you what little that I can.
Man is like the acorn from the mighty tree, at first little and looking
Not much like what he will become, but if he keeps on trying
And praying and doing good, righting wrongs, and helping others,
Then, as he grows and learns about the world, some way, some day
He'll know that, whatever else he may have been, he has become a man.

- **What is a Man?** © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

Cosmic Joke

Adam, my man, God is my name;
You and Creation are my game.
I'm finished with you; but you get no rest.
Your life is no more than a simple jest.

Oh, you think I'm not being serious.
Now I really do find that to be curious.
You don't agree I'm proper, you say?
But I gave you the sun, night and day.

And more, too, such as right and wrong;
A sense of beauty, an ear for a song.
A need to work and to do evil and good,
And free will, too. I wonder if I should.

Well, I know you are able to handle this.
If not, then there's nothing you'll miss.
What, you believe I'm trying to deceive?
That's just like man, so I'll give you Eve.

Oh, she'll keep you quite busy, and by chance
If you need more to do, why tend to my plants.
Watch over the animals, too; they need care
But don't overdo it, or they'll be everywhere.

What, you still ask more about your role?
Little fool, it's very plain to see - you're whole,
The world is yours, I've made no mistake.
Oh, one more thing. Ignore the snake.

- *Cosmic Joke*, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

Three Roses

One rose is for you
One rose is for me
One rose is for we are about to be

Do not be surprised
Do not deny me
There's a long path and places to see

One rose is for you
One rose is for me
One rose is there for all eternity

Here is a possibility
Here is the opportunity
You are mine, I am yours, if you want me

One rose is for you
One rose is for me
One rose beckons by a tall oak tree

Listen to your heart
Lead with your mind
As I whisper softly and claim you as mine

One rose is for you
One rose is for me
One rose reminds us that we are our destiny

Do not be reluctant
Do not stop or flee
The universe has said we are meant to be.

One rose is for you
One rose is for me
One rose blooms there for all eternity.

Three Roses © Leonard Yarbrough 2003

My Buddy

My buddy departed the other day.
He took the trip to far away.
It came as a surprise to us all,
That he was answering a call
That came from far off above.

My buddy departed the other day.
For him, a safe journey I pray,
As he traverses the great span
Of space and time, this man
Called away to heaven to rove.

My buddy departed the other day.
I would have gone along the way.
He did not ask me, nor gave any clue
That he was moving into the Big Blue.
I guess it was time for him to move.

My buddy departed the other day.
I miss him, this pal, what can I say?
He gave me counsel, strength, and
A sense of what it is to be a man.
I miss the tales that he wove.

My buddy departed the other day.
I guess he had to go away.
He was a dear friend, a good mate.
I had things to tell him; it's too late.
Hell is losing the ones we love.

My Buddy © Leonard Yarbrough 2003

Paeon

It is on this occasion that I offer
To pay tribute to the things I admire
And honor and respect with all my might.
There are several such things, you know,
And I hardly know which first to cite.

First, I must acknowledge my parents
Who formed me out of their love
One for the other and gave me life.
It wasn't an easy thing for them, to do
Then in those years before the great Strife.

Yet they did and for my sister and I
There was always plenty of love
And a roof above and food for all.
They gave to us the zest of scholarship
And the pride to stand alone, and tall.

Then, there were my teachers, who
Never complained about my abilities
They just allowed me to grow and study.
And they offered a means to reach my goals.
When I failed, they were still there for me.

Always encouraging, seldom disparaging
Always available for consultation and help.
I never thanked them before; this I regret,
But I now say to all that are here to hear,
These are true heroes, who I'll never forget.

I had a wife once, and I caused her much grief
And I allowed that grief to consume me until
I had only anger and bitterness, sick in my heart.
Yet she loved me, as I had loved her, and now
I know that she was stronger; she let me part.

She taught our children so very well the things
That she had been taught, the sparkle of dew
In the morning, the beauty of the hummingbird
And the joy of a rainbow and the sunset's glory.
These things she did so well, with a loving word.

My country stands for liberty and opportunity
And it has given me much, asking in return
So very little, it seems, and yet all around me
I read and hear of what is wrong and not working
But look at what we have and the way we can be.

I do not understand why we must always disagree
When we are all but simple beings on the same
Journey through life. I know that this also lends
A zest to living, so even not understanding, I give
Thanks for all those who their diverse ways attend.

So I give these words of thanksgiving and praise
For I'm truly thankful for the things I've done
Able to go and see all the places I've seen and
For the places I will yet see and the things that I've
Yet to do and the deeds that still await my hand.

- *Poem*, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

To Chelsea

Chelsea went to heaven one Saturday.

St. Peter greeted her at the gate.

Dogs do not go to heaven, they say.

They have no souls, it's not their fate.

We know better, you and me.

Dogs do go to heaven; for they

In their loyalty allow us to be

Just as we are, with feet of clay.

Chelsea did not care about that.

She took care of each of us, in her way.

She was the queen wherever she sat,

And we were hers to love and obey.

When she left us on that day so sad

We wept, it was hard to say good-bye

To a loyal dog whose grace we had

Now she's at home in up on high.

To Chelsea © Leonard Yarbrough 2003

No Answers

Space and stars, planets and comets, dreams gone awry;
Cold kisses, imagined wrongs, and long, lonely nights.
Careless words, idle thoughts, and absent friends,
When did they leave, and why all the fights?

Too many weekdays and too few weekends;
Too much to do for too many and for too little pay
And so we rush back and forth, hither and yon.
What are we doing, for whom, and who can say?

No Answers © Leonard Yarbrough 2002

The Watcher

I saw a very sad thing today.
A child was all alone at play.

He wanted a friend, don't you see?
But, he had none, there was only me.

I saw a cruel act yesterday.
The children had a cat at bay.
The cat was old, tired, forlorn.
They killed him that early morn.

I saw a wonderful scene the other day.
It was just at nine, near an old causeway.
I looked up, a falling star lit the sky.
Oh, it was so bright, and away up high.

I saw a sight the other day in town.
I couldn't believe it; I had to sit down.
Two cops, all dressed in dark blue,
Arrested two skate boarders just the two.

I saw a grown man cry the other day.
His wife had just died, what can I say?
His children were grown and far away.
Now he is all alone and can not pray.

I watched an angry man for a while.
We knew no joy and would not smile.
I watched him, for he seemed so proud.
Yet he was alone there in the crowd.

I stopped by a small garden nearby.
Oh, the lovely flowers, I had to cry
Tears of joy at this beautiful sight.
A garden is truly God's greatest delight.

I saw couple in love not so long ago.
They were wrapped up in each other so.
I wondered if their love would last or not.
It's a precious thing; it's all they've got.

I listened to a fearful old man preach
Against earthly pleasures; he should teach
Us to enjoy what little we have. Instead,
He'd rather have his flock be very afraid.

I came across a class there in the park.
To the youngsters it seemed just a lark.
Then, I watched the teacher, a young man
Who tried to teach, but his class just ran.

I saw an old black man down by the street.
He seemed to be tired, in his face was defeat.
Then, all at once, a young girl came to his aid,
Took his hand, and bought him lemonade.

I watched you all while I was out walking.
You were all so busy, and all were talking
About this and that; I wonder if you know
How much you say and how little is so.

I pondered all these things I hav seen.
The world is as we make it, or as mean
Or as grand as we want. We get to say
How it will be as we live day by day.
- *The Watcher*. © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

The Land of Nod

Here deep inside the land of Nod
No one is strange, no one is odd.
Still, there are some curiosities
Flitting in the flowers with the bees.

There is the marvelous White Rabbit,
Whose only virtue is a lone repetitive habit
Of fretting over small things known to him,
But to the rest of us are just a whim.

Then there is the marvelous Cheshire Cat
Smiling to all, while all the while he grins.
Nothing happens, but we all feel really good
After all, it's not about doing as we should.

Next we have the wicked witches, in all colors,
Who have many enemies, and no neighbors.
Everyone is a threat, none can be trusted,
And whoever tries promptly gets busted.

And let us not forget the lowly adder,
A sneaky creature, far down the ladder,
Whose vicious bite is seldom noticed
Until the victim is suddenly missed.

It is a strange place for us to be in,
Hidden away in a land so seldom seen
By normal people, who are able to know
The difference between the high and the low.

Yes, welcome to the Land of Nod,
A strange land, which is always odd,
Where many things are strange indeed,
And survival is always the only creed.

The Land of Nod © Leonard Yarbrough 2002

The Old Man

See the old man sitting all alone,
Staring out into who knows where.
Do you wonder what his thoughts are?
Of lost youth, daring deeds, sea faing,
Or of grand adventures, sights so rare.

Perhaps he was in one a Great war,
Serving his country and its proud flag.
Perhaps he recalls a long gone mate
Who is gone, and he is all alone;
And all he can do is to sit and wait.

See the old man scratch his head, just so,
And reach for the newspaper at his side.
He looks a moment, nodding all the while,
Thinking, perhaps, of some past event
Which pleases him, for there is a smile.

I walked over and sat down beside him.
Then, as he turned and looked me over,
I thought about what I could say.
But before I could say a single word,
He spoke, "Why don't you just go away?"

See the old man sitting all alone,
Staring out into who knows where.
I do not wonder what his thoughts are,
Of lost youth, daring deeds, sea faing,
Or of grand adventures. I don't care.
The Old Man © Leonard Yarbrough 2002

My Lady

I have a lady ever so wondrously fair;
Lovely, full of life, with light brown hair
Never a cross word with me, e'en though
I sometimes roam, she knows I love her so.

She's full of life and joy, a perfect mate.
I don't know why she allowed me to date
Her when she could have her pick of men.
No matter, she let me think I chose her then.

Sweet lips, oh, so sweet, and when I hold her
I am content, for there is nothing else I'd rather
Do than lie there with her, watching her abed,
Talking, loving, as if we were newly wed.

We have some very intimate words we use.
Perhaps we shouldn't, but when we fuse
As one in passion embraced, it's heaven,
And we two thankful for the love we're given.

Oh, she loves me, this I truly know to be so,
And I love her truly, this we both do know.
Yes, I miss her for we are often parted.
'Tis necessary, for our lives are so charted.

My lady comes to me when I cannot be
with her, for I think she wants to be with me
As much as I want to be with her, perhaps more.
Those moments are precious, like none before.

A career woman is she, with great responsibility,
For she is determined to create with her ability
As much as I am, doing the things that I must do,
And yet, at the end of the day, we miss each so.

I am quite lucky to have my very own, special lady.
And she is special, and loving, and lovely to see.
I take her, she takes me, she is so passionate
For me, with me. She is my lady, my love, my mate.

My Lady © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

A Teacher's Lament

We do not study history much any more.
Nor do we read grand literature.

It is irrelevant, so say the savants.

Only our feelings matter, and

We cannot talk of pain, or death,
They may remind us of other miscreants.

Humankind is basically good, they say.

History suggests otherwise, literature too.

So we will not examine those issues.

After all, feelings are the thing today.

Who dares to stop and suggest

Our self-centered lives are flimsy tissues?

We do not read history much anymore,

Nor do we read grand literature.

Perhaps we should look at ourselves today

And admit that somewhere in our teaching

We have been both wrong and foolish.

Ignorance is a terrible price for us to pay.

A Teacher's Lament © Leonard Yarbrough 2001

Wandering

I've sailed the seven seas, a long time ago,

And slept under the Southern Cross many times

I've gone into dark jungles and over high sierras

Walked by raging rivers and along dusty trails.

There's always another place that I haven't seen

And when I'm tired of where I am, I'll move on along,

Seeking, searching, I do not know for what or even why.

Someday, perhaps I'll grow tired of traveling on;

Enough to want to stay at and put down my roots

But until I do, I'll keep traveling on, looking for

Another place that I haven't yet been.

Wandering © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

Tears

Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
When will the tears come to an end?
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Listen to the crying that gives the tears.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Sense the agony behind the tears.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Feel the pain and the anguish of loss
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
But there are also tears of joy...
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Look for the beauty of the world.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Savor the stillness and the awe of God
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Look on all that is grand about man.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Too, there are tears of triumph and glory.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
At the realization that we are mortal.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
At the realization that we are flawed.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
At the realization that we are loved.
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Tears... tears ... and still more tears...
Tears © Leonard Yarbrough 2001

Hezekiah

Hezekiah was the son of a slave who was the son of a slave.
Nevertheless, he was a good man, kind, generous, and brave.
And he always did his best, no matter what he was tasked to do.
I knew him when I was a lad, he was a good friend, this I know.
When he was an old man, the master gave him his liberty.
And now he was set free, a marvelous thing, don't you agree?
Hezekiah had never asked for that, it was not a thing he desired.
And so, at the age of sixty-three, Hezekiah laid down and died.
Why did he die, you ask? Well, I cannot say, I don't know.
Someone thought he was doing what good he should, so
The act was done, but the thing that strikes me as odd
Is that no one thought to ask Hezekiah if they should.

- *Hezekiah*, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

Good Ole Boys

Pickup truck, rusty jeep, California Dooley, Harley hawg -
Big wheels, open glass, old engines, and an old hound dog.
Engine revs, a high whine, a roar, the squeal of rubber
On the pavement, the stink of oil, stale beer, lye soap,
Along with the sweet smell of sweat and Colorado dope.

Look at them, outside a crude roadside beer hall
Swapping stories, lying, drinking Bud by the pint
Like possums in a garbage can, they've no sense at all.
Now a bet on one or the other, fistful of money in an old can
Held by the runt, they don't consider him a man.

Now they're off, right down a two lane road, loud and free
Side by side, no thought of what to do if there happens to be
Someone who decides to come down that road at the same time
That they are racing so carelessly, for the race is the great lure.
What the hell! They've done it before, maybe again, for sure,

Uh oh. A tire blows, one swerves into the other - blam!
Squeal of metal on metal, loud cry of pain, "Oh, damn!"
All come running - what's happened there at the bend.
The big pickup's in a culvert, the other smashed in a tree
O Lord! - the driver's dead, and the runt just looks at me.
- *Good Ole Boys* © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

Grace

I remember Grace.
She was a cousin, older
But she always took time
To show a small boy that
She cared.

One November she died.
I do not know how or why.
The world turned dark,
And the rains came down.
I feared.

The years passed,
I traveled far and often.
Still, I often thought
About cousin Grace.
And I cried.

Do you have a cousin
Like my cousin Grace?
I hope that you do.
Everyone needs love,
And a bit of pride.

Grace © Leonard Yarbrough 2001

Lazarus

Lazarus rose from the dead, so they say.
I don't know, I wasn't there, not that day.

Still, it must have been a fine thing.

After all, when you're dead, zing!

You're gone, there's no tomorrow,

Only those left behind to sorrow.

I wonder how it occurred back then?

Not many had revived after that end.

Had he any thoughts about coming back?

Or was he glad to get out of that sack?

What do you do when the dear departed

Returns, as though he had never started?

Did the undertaker have to repay his fee?

What about all those flowers – they weren't free.

I guess that it is all right to return from the dead;

Seems like a worrisome thing, it must be said.

I think that Lazarus committed a very great crime.

After all, he cheated death -- for a time.

--Lazarus © Leonard Yarbrough 1999

The Scout

He's seen the Southern Cross in the dark of night.

And he has sailed the Straits of Magellan, too

He's walked the far plains of Pamplona

And trekked across the Russian Steppes.

He climbed to the top of the Southern Alps

As well as the mighty Kilimanjaro.

He's lain under the far northern stars

But always alone, always so very much alone.

--The Scout. © Leonard Yarbrough, 1998

Politically Correct

I want to be sure that I've got this right.
If I haven't, I'll be in trouble with my peers.
What am I prating about, so late at night?
About what is right, not what is so, Oh my,
I must have drunk far too many beers.

It is a serious matter, however, being correct.
We cannot allow the existence of being wrong.
At least so say my colleagues, all who expect
That we all should agree, even if we don't know
What is so, we all must agree, in order to belong.

Why do I have to agree, in order to belong?
Oh, that's easy, for you see we must agree.
If we do not, that means we must accommodate
A divergence of thought, even that someone else
Could be right. Can't you see, we must always agree.

The Church split itself over this issue, you know,
So have nations, and tribes, and other groups.
It does no good to say, wait, enough, let's just
Get along with each other, be kind, and not want
To be right or have others be wrong, this doesn't work.

I offered this, mostly in jest, the other day, to my peers.
My goodness, what a fright it was for them to have to think
That there might be another thought, or idea, or opinion
That was not agreed upon, for after all, we are the ones
Who have to determine what is correct, not what is right.

Politically correct is well and good, I suppose, for it seems
That it keeps us all from having to think long and hard
About what really matters, and what really does not.
And, too, I'm sure, we may all be concerned that what
We think is right, is not, after all's said and done. Oh me!
- *Politically Correct*, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

The Vacant Room

I walked by an old schoolhouse today.
Roof was sagging, windows all shattered.
There were no doors, not a one to push.
I wandered in, bemused, and a bit tattered,
For I'd traveled far that day, up since dawn,
But I was curious, at the unexpected hush.

Walked into what had been a classroom
Filled with dry lectures and students' laughter.
Those were gone now, time had taken its toll;
An old desk there, and a well used blotter.
Crooked blinds still hung, cobwebs all around;
No chairs were left, only an old class roll.

Where are the scholars of yesteryear, I mused?
Where are they and what have they done?
Traces remained, an old button, a tea bag,
Ceiling all cracked, the paint long gone;
Dirty mirror, cracked, crooked on a wall,
Motes of dust in the air, in the corner a rag.

I stopped and listened, nothing could be heard.
Time had taken its toll; the present an intruder;
Just the past there, in that room, everywhere.
So I waited, contemplating what must have been
A place of learning, a refuge from chores at home;
But now a place that is nothing, nowhere.

- *The Vacant Room* © Leonard Yarbrough, 1999

Call of the Open Road

Good-bye, my love, I cannot stay;
The open road calls me away.
There are sights yet to be seen,
And places I've not yet seen.
Do not weep for me, my dear love,
You know I was born to rove;
A traveling man I was meant to be.
I have my stick, a song, and places to see.
Come along, if you will – I cannot stay.
The weather is fair; let's not delay.
The need to go is strong, so strong.
The road is calling, I must move along.
Good-bye, my love, I cannot stay;
The open road is calling me today.
Call of the Open Road © Leonard Yarborough 2010

My Home Town

When I was growing up
I wanted to travel far away
From my home town.
It was only a small place
And I thought it was
Not where I would be found.
So when I finished school
I made it a point to get away.
I traveled far, to distant shores
And I thought I was living
The good life and doing well
While I was making my scores.

Oh, I saw many things, and
I accomplished many deeds
As well. But one day while
Drinking at a small bar
The errant thought appeared
That I could no longer smile.

What was this? I was happy,
Or so I thought, but what
was the meaning to what I
was now doing? Was that
How would I be remembered?
So, in that bar, I began to cry.

So I sought many wise men
Who were no help, for when
I asked what must I do?
They all said the same words,
Or so it seemed; which were:
Your life is not about you.

I pondered these words at last,
And finally I began to understand
That perhaps I had been wrong;
That I had things all backwards.
And so I began another journey
To my home town, where I belong.

- ***My Home Town*** © Leonard Yarborough, 1998

Each Day

I promise that I will
Pick up after myself;
Improve my world;
Forget my miseries;
Help someone;
Speak truly;
Act from integrity;
Smell the flowers;
Watch the sunset;
Listen for the wizards;
Make a new friend;
Write an old friend;
Forgive an enemy;
Love everyone;
And drink only good
whiskey and fine wine.

- *Each Day*. © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997

The Learned Rascals

Professor, fakir, beggarman, charlatan, thief -
Avoid them, they bring nothing but grief.
The professor is the worst, for he claims
Nothing but the truth, which he confesses,
Is whatever rubbish that he thinks to say
No matter that it won't stand the light of day.

The fakir is sly, seeking to fool the population
With the outward show of self emulation
And piety, stoic, firm, unyielding, and a fraud
Through and through, and you and I applaud
While he befuddles our minds, even our souls.
He the knowing duper, and we the dumb fools.

I suppose that the beggarman is some better
Of them, I reckon, with a silver line of patter.
Asking everyone that passes by for just a tittle
Not so very much, you see, just a bit, a little.
All the while sneering inside at the timorous
Who save their conscience by being generous.

Beware the charlatan, too; trickery is his design
As he seems to appear caring, kind, and benign
Outwardly, he wants to help, asking for naught
Inwardly, he sneers at all who become caught
In his snare, for he is a clever fellow, likable too.
And he knows that there is nothing we can do.

Of them all, I most worry about the thief
He takes from others, for it is his belief
That whatever he wants is his to take
Whether it be riches or just a piece of cake
It is his due, you see, and we have to play
The game by his rules, for he will have his way.

Pedant, fakir, beggarman, charlatan, thief -
Avoid them, they are nothing but a lot of grief.
By now I'm sure you know what I have to say
We are all of them, the same; there is no way
To avoid what we are, for it is part of the game
That we who they are, we are all the same.

- *The Learned Criminal* © Leonard Yarbrough, 1998

Downtown

I took a stroll downtown today,
It was a depressing sight;
Empty storefronts, deserted streets,
Trash scattered about, traffic was light

The buildings were there, neglected,
But where were the people?
Some vagrants sitting along the curb,
And far away I saw a steeple.

I wished I had not come here
Where there was so little left to see.
And I could remember another time
When downtown was the place to be.

Once this was a place of energy, hope;
Once this was a place of ambition, thrift.
Now it is just another inner city desert,
Waiting patiently for a costly facelift.

I turned a corner, looked around;
Watched a cop kick a loose board;
Saw a hooker standing slackly
in a doorway, lonely and untoward.

Downtown had died, some time ago;
Wasn't noticed, there was no funeral.
The politicians still meet and talk
About the future and other folderol.

I will not go there again, I think.
It's too depressing, and the boulevards
Once so dynamic are potholed, cracked,
Vacant and scattered with glass shards.

- **Downtown** © Leonard Yarbrough, 1998

The Provost

One has to be an academic
In order to know of the post
That belongs to the person
Who is the college provost.
Of all the curious positions,
It isn't one that to me beckons.
It more like that of a farmer who
Wishes to herd a flock of chickens.

He is the leader of a faculty
Composed of many self-deceivers,
Composed of a diverse bunch,
A rag-tag group of non-believers
In the wily provost's ability
To lead and guide, and to teach
Them as faculty, his only duty.
And so, he stays out of reach.

Still, the Provost must stand
For what the college stands.
For, if he doesn't do this thing
Then we faculty tie his hands
With querulous quarrels and spats.
Like chickens we'll fly over the fence
In the name of academic freedom
Never bothering to make sense.

The Provost believes he can depend
Upon his considerable power, when
In fact, he has very little power.
All he can do is stay and tend
The academic garden, mostly forlorn

For we faculty will proceed to go
Blithely ahead and do whatever
We wish to do and do it just so.

The curious thing is, that each of us
Will work along an individual way.
And later in the term when we stop
To see how well we say our say
We find, much to our surprise, that
What has happened looks like chance;
It isn't proper, nor fit, but it seems
To be a version of a very crazy dance.

The provost knows this, of course.
That is why he is so often flustered
His faculty really hasn't a clue -
They are after all sequestered
From reality, and, let's face it
If herding chickens is a fine art,
Herding a faculty is much more so.
Still, I'm glad it's not my part

So here's to that fussy old man
The provost, long may he pretend
That he really does lead his merry
Band of faculty, it's no great sin.
Let him have his academic toys and
All those inscrutable processes and norms.
In spite of often being at cross-purposes
We do, after all, fill in his damned forms.

- **The Provost** © Leonard Yarbrough, 1998

My Angel

I have an angel, you know;
She watches as I come and go.
Sometimes she smiles at me and
Perhaps then I can understand
For I'm not always good, you see.
But that's why she watches me.

We all need our angels to tend.
If not, I think that we would bend
From the struggle to live and love.
My angel is always there above;
If not her, then her sisters are
There instead, and they too care.

How many angels are there?
A very great number, somewhere
And one is always there for me;
Giving me the strength to be
As I should be, faithful and strong,
And, perhaps, to right a wrong.

So look for your angel today.
She's out there, this I can say
If you only would allow her
To watch over and protect you.
And if you trip, she'll be there
To lend a hand and wipe a tear.
- *My Angel* © Leonard Yarbrough, 1998

Blind Man's Walk

Tap, tap, tap the sound made by the cane
Tap, tap, tap pecking slowly down the way
Tap, tap, tap making an endless refrain
Tap, tap, tap tomorrow, today, yesterday.

I watched the blind man move down the street
Swinging his long red and white cane to and fro.
A shuffling gait made from not lifting his feet
As he proceeded down the sidewalk just so.

Tap, tap, tap ever so constant and so forlorn;
Tap, tap, tap every morning and on into night;
Tap, tap, tap a sad and one without scorn;
Tap, tap, tap made by one who knows no light.

So thankful am I that I can see the day;
So glad am I that I have the vision of my sight;
So happy am I that I can see to go my way;
So sad that I cannot take away the eternal night.

Tap, tap, tap like the beat of a ticking clock
Tap, tap, tap echoing softly into the air
Tap, tap, tap ever so surely, down the block
Tap, tap, tap slowly moving from here to there.
- *Blind Man's Walk* © Leonard Yarbrough, 1998