

LOVE LETTERS
TO A
MIRAGE
IN THE
DESERT

From Here to Eternity

) *Sarah H. Buss* (

Handwritten signature or scribble, possibly containing the word "dash" written in the center.

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TO A
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Love Letters to a Mirage in the Desert

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Dedication

To those
who have stood by me
for the long haul
and
through the ups and downs
of my life journey

Acknowledgements

The two editors of this book are a most amazing team. While LiDona Wagner lives in Eugene, OR and Marilyn Crocker in West Newfield, ME, their diverse editorial skills balance each other perfectly. They have guided me in creating and ultimately finalizing an enhanced and unified document. This leaves me in the middle, in Austin, TX, feeling very centered and satisfied with my second book of poetry, *Love Letters to a Mirage in the Desert*.

The three of us have danced through the editorial process, reaching back many years to reclaim a collegiality of both breadth and depth. What a joy it has been to reinforce and sustain these relationships of deep spirit.

Others too have stepped forward to support me in this creative endeavor. Among them are:

- Herman Greene
- Jody Hendryx
- Terry Sherrell

I am grateful to all, beyond all measure of expectations, for entering into this process and supporting me on my journey.

Author's Introduction

An ever changing mirage in the desert, this book of poetry ripples like sand dunes across the desert, until the reader arrives, unexpectedly, upon a true oasis.

Each of the seven parts of the book is a newly delivered stack of love letters. The first four are pure poetry, like the ups and downs of dunes.

Parts V and VI offer a refreshing oasis. The methodology presented in Part V encourages the reader's imagination to expand and grow like prolific vegetation. Part VI guides one deeply into a pool of invigorating and restorative water. The poetic quotes provided here allow one to focus in meditation and then, when it is time, to surface and resume life's journey.

Part VII returns once again to the dunes. Through a series of poems, the author shares more personal aspects of her interior journey as a poet.

Consider having a
Musical Interlude
between each part,
giving space
for the mood
to change.

Whatever pleases you!

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PROLOGUE

A Mirage in the Desert



**Fair Warning
(A Disclaimer)**

Do NOT Take
My Poems
Literally

But

You Can
Believe
Every Word –

For
The
Most Part

PART I

WHITE HOT HEAT

Young and in Love



Sex by the Side of the Road

“Sweetheart, I think
we have a flat tire.”
“Oh really, do you think so?
I’ll pull over.”

I step out
of the car
And investigate carefully,
as though to examine the tires.

“No, I guess it
was nothing after all,”
As I reach to stroke
the arm of my lover.

Parted lips reach in,
to find mine waiting,
Tongues touch,
in gentle embrace.

Vitamin B-12 (for the nerves)

I wish
 my nerves
 would calm,
So that I could
 just love you,
 pure and simple.

Awesome

I Cannot Predict
The Present
Which is Now
Happening to Me.

It moves
Deeper, Deeper, Deeper,
Into a Bottomless
Pit,
of Wonderment.

Unfolding Still,
An Hourglass
Of Now, Opens
To Meet Itself.

AWESOME,
When the Now
EXPLODES
And Becomes
ETERNAL

Feel the Pain

I will not fear the pain
of loving you
Though surely
it is there
Awaiting me
in the middle of the night.

I will not fear the pain
of loving you
Though its
sweet flavor
Eludes me
in my search.

I will not fear the pain
of loving you
Though your
compelling presence
Draws me
near.

I will not fear the pain
of loving you,
Though you
will be
Forever
out of reach.

PART II

LOST IN THE DESERT

With Real Friends



An Eternity

Have a few
 weeks passed
 OR
Shall we go
 on forever?

Speak to Me

Do you prefer
to continue in overload
rather than face some unknown reality?

Do not sabotage our
kinship by doing yourself in
on my account.

It is okay—nay required—
to speak truth
to me

Unless you want
to retreat to
an illusion of safety.

True Love

I wonder why
it is easier
To love
than to be loved.

Why is it
that hearts shut down
When another
draws near

And yet
open wide,
With outreached arms
when others are in need?

Why is it easier
to be generous
With love,
painful though it sometimes is,

Than to
embrace vulnerability
When another
walks into our life?

True love is
a two way street,
Not a one way
road to Heaven.

Face to Face

It's always good
to see you face to face
To know that you
are truly well,
and steadfast in your mission.

It's always good
to see you face to face
To see
that you are real,
and imperfect.

It's always good
to see you face to face,
To be assured
that you have not wavered
in our friendship.

It's always good
to see you face to face.
Your eyes will tell me
if you are game playing,
or, for sure, truth telling.

An Everyday Resolution

I would never
want to compete
with you,
on being
a good listener

But I would
like to learn
from you,
so please [teacher] do your part,
and allow me.

And I am sure
there are other areas
where I would
NOT want to
compete with you

So everybody can just,
RELAX!

And anyone who
thinks otherwise
is just a fool.

A Search for Meaning

Why did you
 come into my life,
Why, Teacher, except
 that I might learn.

In whatever way
 life unfolds,
You, you
 are my Teacher.

From the very beginning
 when we had
That first lunch
 together

You, you
 became my Teacher.
It was
 Destiny.

And if you
notice
That I love you
in a deep and profound way

It is because
you are my Teacher
In a deep and
profound way.

So don't be afraid,
It is nothing—
Poof, poof, like a
Cloud of Smoke
In the Sky,
Gone, gone, gone...

The Best of My Intentions

You Are
A Kindred Spirit.

You Are

My
Teacher

My
Friend

My
Soul Sister,

My
Colleague

And
A
Next of Kin.

I Am
A Kindred Spirit.

I Am

Your
Teacher

Your
Friend

Your
Soul Sister,

Your
Colleague

And
A
Next of Kin.

Kindred Spirits

You Are
A Kindred Spirit.

You Are

My
Teacher—For Sure

My
Friend—Maybe

My
Soul Sister—Certainly

My
Colleague—Probably

And
A
Next of Kin—Destiny.

I Am
A Kindred Spirit.

I Am

Your
Teacher—Perhaps

Your
Friend—Not Quite

Your
Soul Sister—Undeniably

Your
Colleague—We'll See

And
A
Next of Kin—Destiny.

Out of My Control

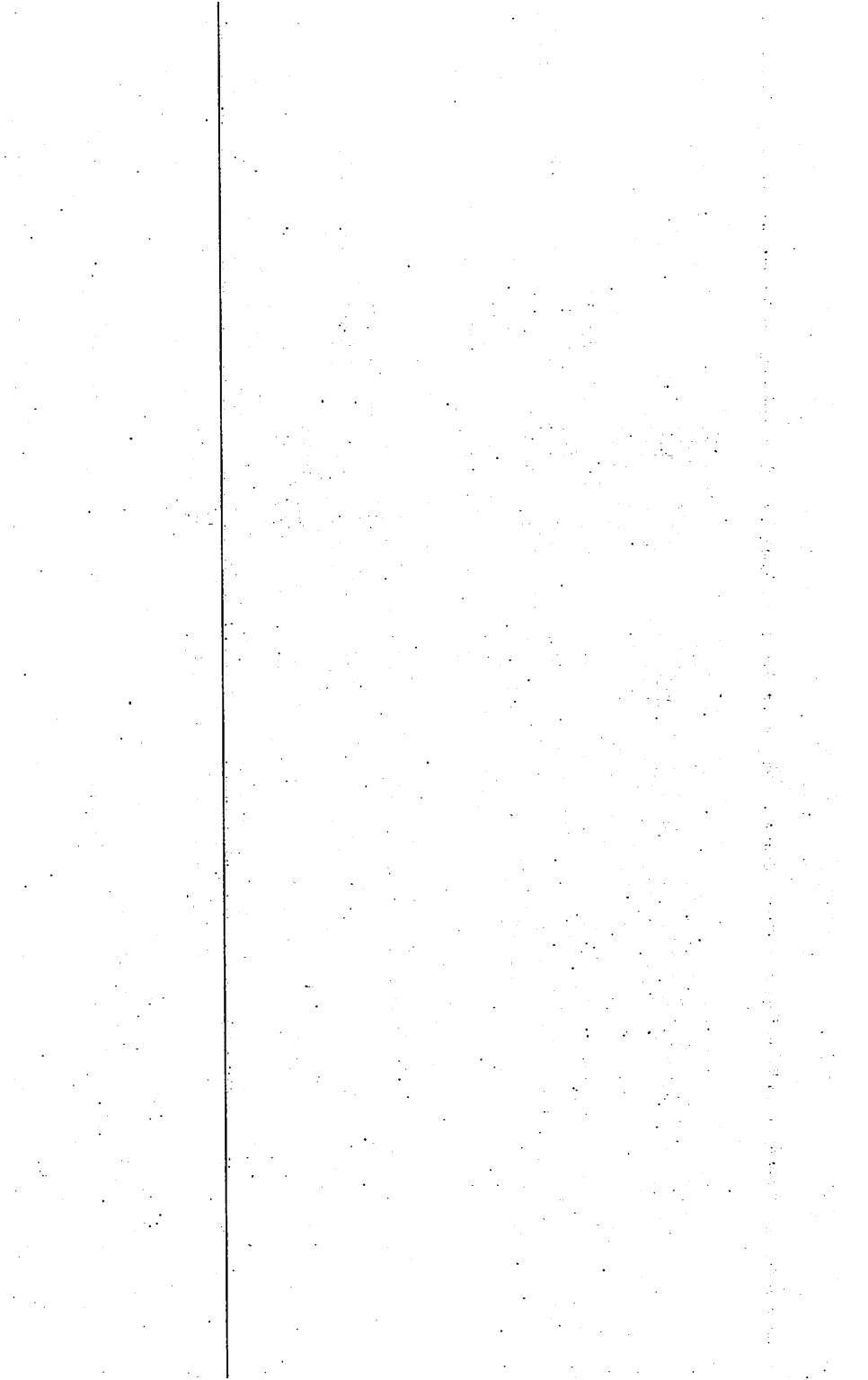
It is
out of my control
so
I don't need
to
worry about it,
one way or the other.

PART III

FOUND IN A CAVE

In Search of Center





The Mystic Life

I choose to live
 the Mystic Life.
I refuse to reduce
 my life to the psychological
I refuse to limit
 my life to the rational.
I am a mystic.

I choose to live
 the Mystic Life.
I refuse to surrender
 my life to the sexual.
I refuse to be defined by
 my husband,
 my children,
 my lover.
I am a mystic.

I will never
 retreat
For any length
 of time
To the Desert
 of Australia,
 of Egypt,
Nor to the far reaches
 of the West Texas
 Chihuahuan Desert.

I will never
retreat to the
Caves of Thailand
in seclusion
Nor will I
confine myself
To their mystical
Space.

I plant my feet
firmly
In this now
that has
Presented itself
to me.
I choose the *Mystic Life*
at the center of my being.

Prickly Pear

Prickly Pear, you are
the Concretion,
The Sounding Board,
the Reality Check
Of Universal Love.
If not,
This Poet has
no use for you.

Intensity (too serious me)

The intensity of pain
 recalls my mother
The intensity of sorrow
 draws her near
The intensity of life
 reflects her presence.

The intensity of intimacy
 comforts me
The intensity of reality
 sustains me
The intensity of truth
 keeps me steadfast on my path.

**A
Profound
Yes
to Life**

I am open
to whatever the
FUTURE
brings
because
it will always
be
the
PRESENT

**An
Affirmation
of
Life**

I need not
fear the future
because
by the time
I get there,
it will always
be the
present

Opening

Being Present
Is all about
Opening
In the Most
Expansive
Sense of the Word

Truth

Truth is the
Manifest Spirit
of
Reality

Reality
is the
Essential Nature
of
Truth

**Fear
No-Fear
Fear**

What I Fear Most
is
Having Nothing
to
Fear.

All Other Fears
are created
to avoid this
Singular,
Primal,
Fear:

Emptiness,
The Void,
Silence,
Death.

Nothing Left to Fear

Be Watchful
(Counting Backwards)

Each of us is
as close to death
as the other,
regardless of health,
age, or wisdom.

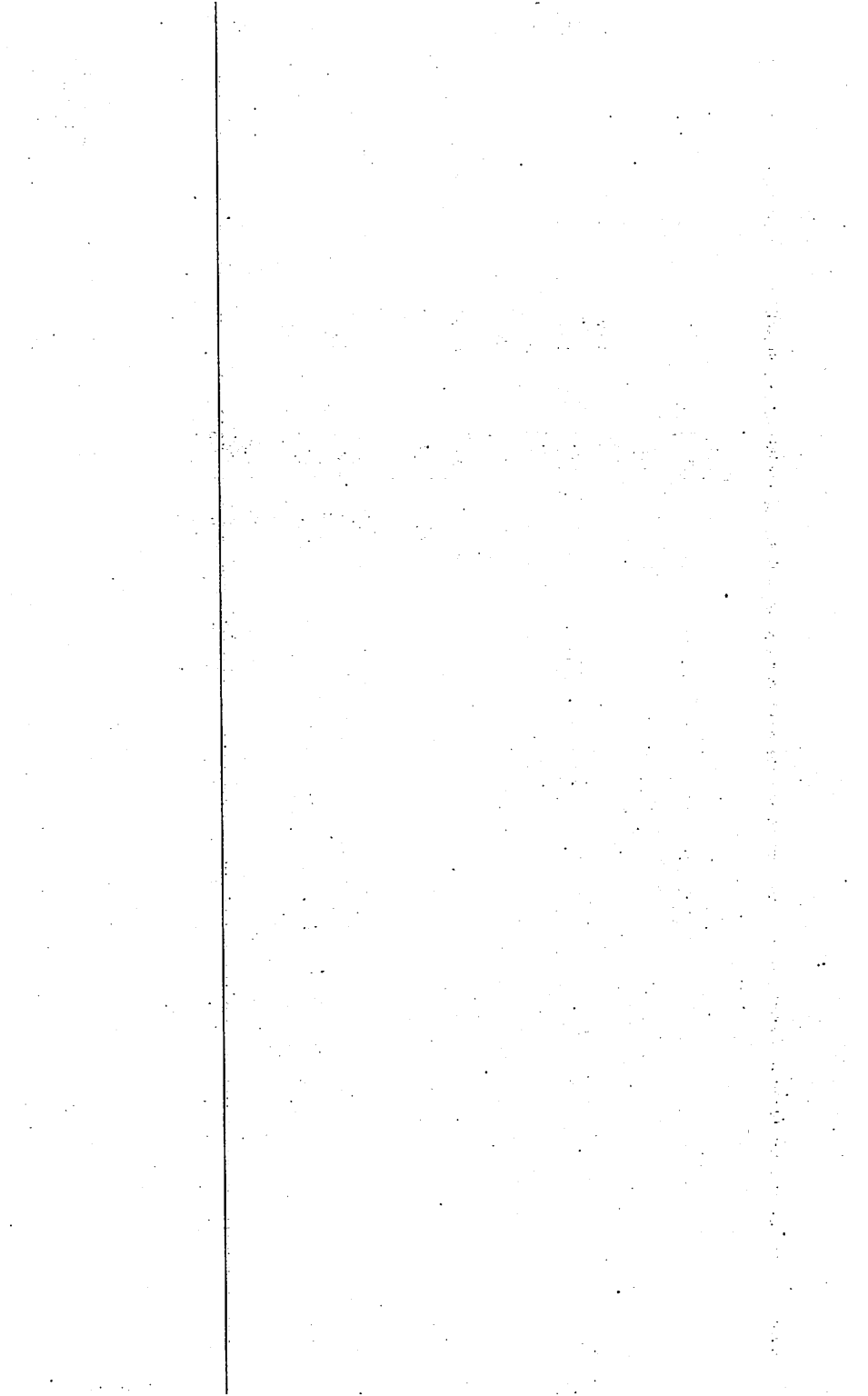
Be Watchful

PART IV

UNIVERSAL LOVE

At the Center





Flawless

I ask myself
 is it you that I love,
Or is it The Poetry
 At the Center of My Being?

How could I
 possibly love This Self,
With all the flaws
 exuding from my being?

And yet, and yet,
 that is what I most love about me:
The part that no one else
 would have.

I confess, I confess,
 until my last breath,
I will embrace This Self,
 This Presence,
 This Everlasting Essence.

Cougar Talk
(I am not as young
as I used to be)

As I stood before
the rows of almond butter,
He came in close
to say what beautiful
EYES I have.

We stood talking
about the flax and sesame seed
He held in his hand,
as I lapped up, soaked up,
his male energy.

Shaven bald and tall,
he kept the subject changing
To keep me there,
sharing elder,
cougar wisdom.

Begging to save
what remained of the afternoon,
Both his and mine,
names exchanged
was the price of his departure.

Fasting is Okay (Ash Wednesday)

There is more
going on
In each
of our lives now
Than lunch
can accommodate.

Anyway, it is
the beginning
Of Lent, and
that requires
Giving up something
we crave.

As long as
we both know
It is temporary,
then we can
Anticipate eventually having
a real feast!

Enough is Enough
(make up your mind)

If you want
to say goodbye to me,
NOW
is the time
(to say so).

Otherwise,
get out your calendar.

Curious

Do you
have too many
friends
or
just not enough space
to accommodate them all,
or
just not me,
being of little value
to who you are
in your current
State of Being?

I am just
a passing poet
curious to a fault
about the mysteries
of the Universe,
and of you
and what you
have to offer,
to yourself,
to me,
and
to the Universe.

Old Friends

In my experience,
after three months
new friendships
begin to fade—
is that your intention—
unless they are made
a priority.

Old Friends
need no maintenance.

What is an
old friendship?
It is one that
has stood
the test of time.

In my life, there
are three groups
of old friends:
Those I have known
for 30 years,
Those I have known
for 50 years, and
Those I have known
for 70 years.

Whether we
like it or not
we will always
be friends.

When we see
one another for
the first time
in many years
or in a few days,
either way
it is just like
old times—
just no time at all.

Now back to
those New Friends:
Rarely, but sometimes,
a New Friend will take you
directly to your own center,
and from there
to another lifetime
where you met
for the first time,
and fell irresistibly
in love
for all
Eternity.

And that's the story
of how it is that
rarely, but sometimes,
New Friends
can become
Fast Friends.

The Waiting Game

I need my mother near
in order to be safe,
even though
when she was alive
I wasn't safe,

I couldn't be
because it was her family
that made me unsafe
and if I told her, I feared,
she wouldn't love me anymore.

She died. Then
finally I almost told
so I guess, (maybe)
she doesn't love me anymore.

If
I keep her near,
frozen in time,
maybe someday
she will
love me, forgive me.

That is why
I cling
to
my pain
to
the abuse,
to
love
even (especially) when
it is
out of reach:
all
frozen in time.

An
hourglass opens:
Now I know,
when I let go
of my mother,
her love
is no longer
out of reach,
because
my mother's love
has become

Universal Love:
available
to
all people
in
all time
in
every place,
waiting
for me.

JUST BREATHE,
BREATHE
IN
UNIVERSAL LOVE
EXHALE COMPASSION

(As the country western song goes: “I have been looking for love in all the wrong places.”)

A Seedling

Like a seed
in the Desert,
Love
can lie dormant
for years—
until it rains.

Think, Think
(a meditation)

Close your eyes and ...

Think about what sex would be like,
if you didn't let go of control.

Now
Now
THINK!
THINK!

Think what life could be,
if we would just let go of control.

AWESOME!

Now
WAKE-UP, WAKE-UP
for God's sake
OPEN YOUR EYES.

You are not dreaming;
It's real. It is real.

The Gift of Life

My
Soul Rests
Where my Breath
Centers

Breath
is the
Presence
the
Essence
the
Soul
of
Who I Am

That is
All there is.
Everything else
is an
Illusion,
a
Vehicle,
a
Conduit
of
Spirit,

Invisible
to the
Naked Eye,

Transparent,
as though
Returned to Ashes.

Postlude

The Gift of Death

Where the Breath Goes
So Goes the Soul,

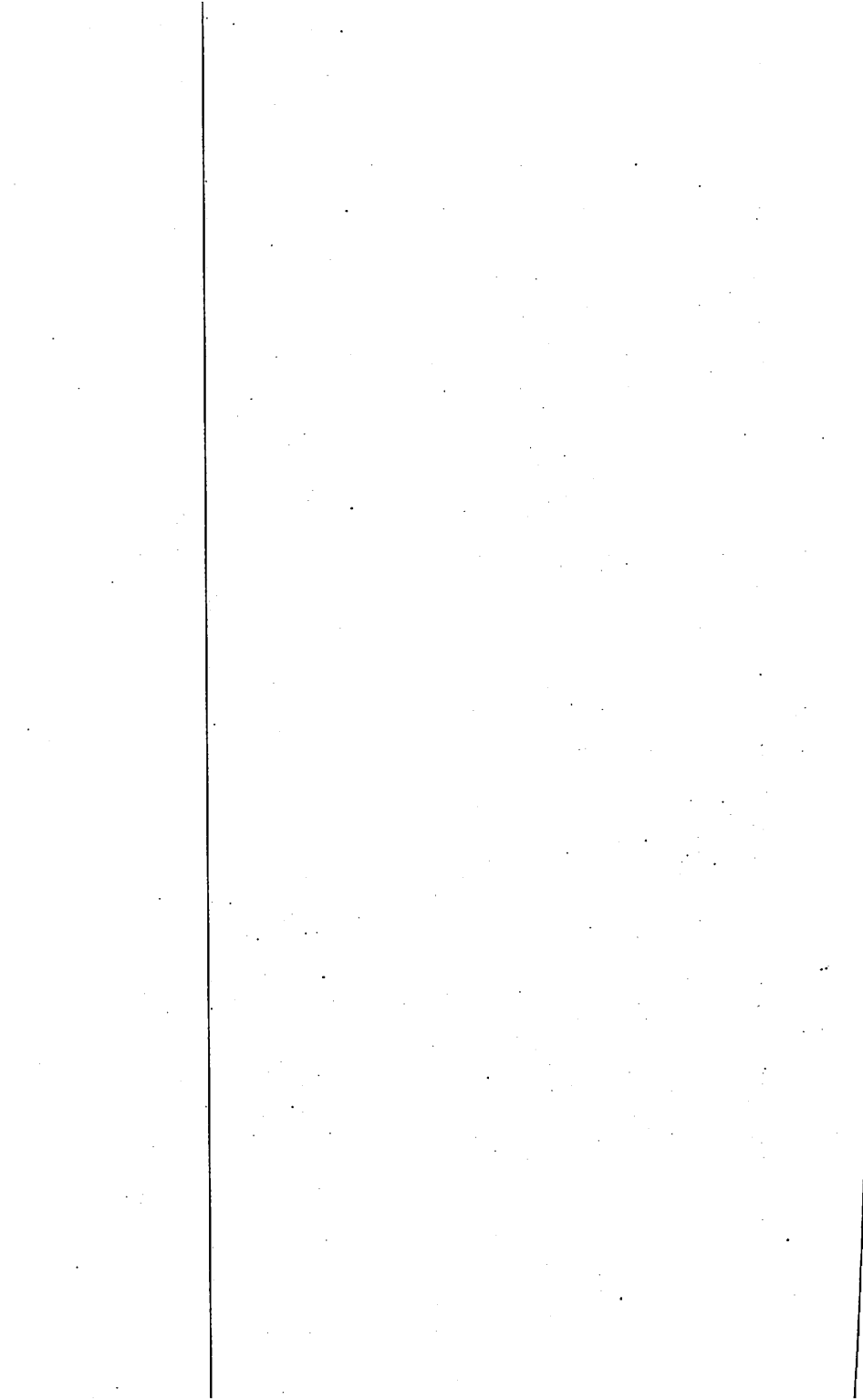
Eternal Life

PART V

OPENING

An Invitation to Ownership





Guided Reflection

A reader's ownership of poetry comes from exploring its deeper meaning. The guided reflection methodology presented here is to facilitate such exploration.

Questions given on the following pages are for use at the ends of PART I, II, III, and IV. They can be used either in one's own solitary practice or with a small group. The questions follow a progression. They are initially OBJECTIVE, then increasingly REFLECTIVE, and finally INTERPRETIVE.

Whether alone or with others, opening oneself to unfolding reflections reveals the luminous potential of the poems in *Love Letters to a Mirage in the Desert*.

Below is a recommended pacing for using the questions in a group setting.

OBJECTIVE

The pace of these questions should elicit short, rapid fire impressions; perhaps even going around the room to enable everyone to answer with a single word or short phrase.

REFLECTIVE

These questions allow participants to relate personally to the body of work by exploring emotions, associations, and memories elicited by the poem. This level is more introspective and requires that people take a bit more time to answer.

INTERPRETIVE

Questions at this level invite exploration of meaning and significance and evoke more creative, imaginative, and possibly more future-oriented answers. Individuals at random can choose to answer — or not. Allow more time and inner space for each answer.

Journey Questions

Part I WHITE, HOT, HEAT Young and in Love

Poem Titles

1. Sex by the Side of the Road
2. Vitamin B-12
3. Awesome
4. Feel the Pain

Questions

Objective

1. What word or phrase comes to mind?

Reflective

2. What single emotion surfaced for you initially?
3. What poem did you want to sit with?

Interpretive

4. Where did one or more of these poems take you?
5. What life lesson or insight, if any, came out of this series of poems?

Journey Questions

Part II LOST IN THE DESERT With Real Friends

Poem Titles

1. An Eternity
2. Speak to Me
3. True Love
4. Face to Face
5. An Everyday Resolution
6. A Search for Meaning
7. The Best of My Intentions
8. Kindred Spirits
9. Out of My Control

Questions

Objective

1. What word or phrase comes back to you right away?
2. What friend comes immediately to mind?

Reflective

3. Who do you think of as a colleague? Why?
4. What teacher has been a mentor for you?

Interpretive

5. When has a soul sister or soul mate taken you to a deep space?
6. When has a friend kept you opening or expanding your horizons, or maybe in some way stretched you a bit?

Journey Questions

Part III FOUND IN A CAVE In Search of Center

Poem Titles

1. The Mystic Life
2. Prickly Pear
3. Intensity
4. A Profound Yes to Life
5. An Affirmation of Life
6. Opening
7. Truth
8. Fear, No-Fear Fear
9. Be Watchful

Questions

Objective

1. Which of these poems immediately surfaced, like cream rising to the top?

Reflective

2. If you want to dig “deep”, which is your “go to” poem?
3. When have you had to “go it alone” in search of center?
4. Have you ever been aware of “emerging from the cave”, or perhaps someone found you there?

Interpretive

5. Were you in any way different when you came out of the cave than when you went in? If so, in what way?

Journey Questions

Part IV

UNIVERSAL LOVE

At the Center

Poem Titles

1. Flawless
2. Cougar Talk
3. Fasting is Okay
4. Enough is Enough
5. Curious
6. Old Friends
7. The Waiting Game
8. A Seedling
9. Think, Think
10. The Gift of Life

Questions

Objective

1. What title got your attention?

Reflective

2. Is there a poem you would like to “retitle”?
If so what would be the new title?
3. Is there a poem in this chapter you intend to claim as your own? If so, which one?
4. Is there another poem anywhere in the book that you will pocket?

Interpretive

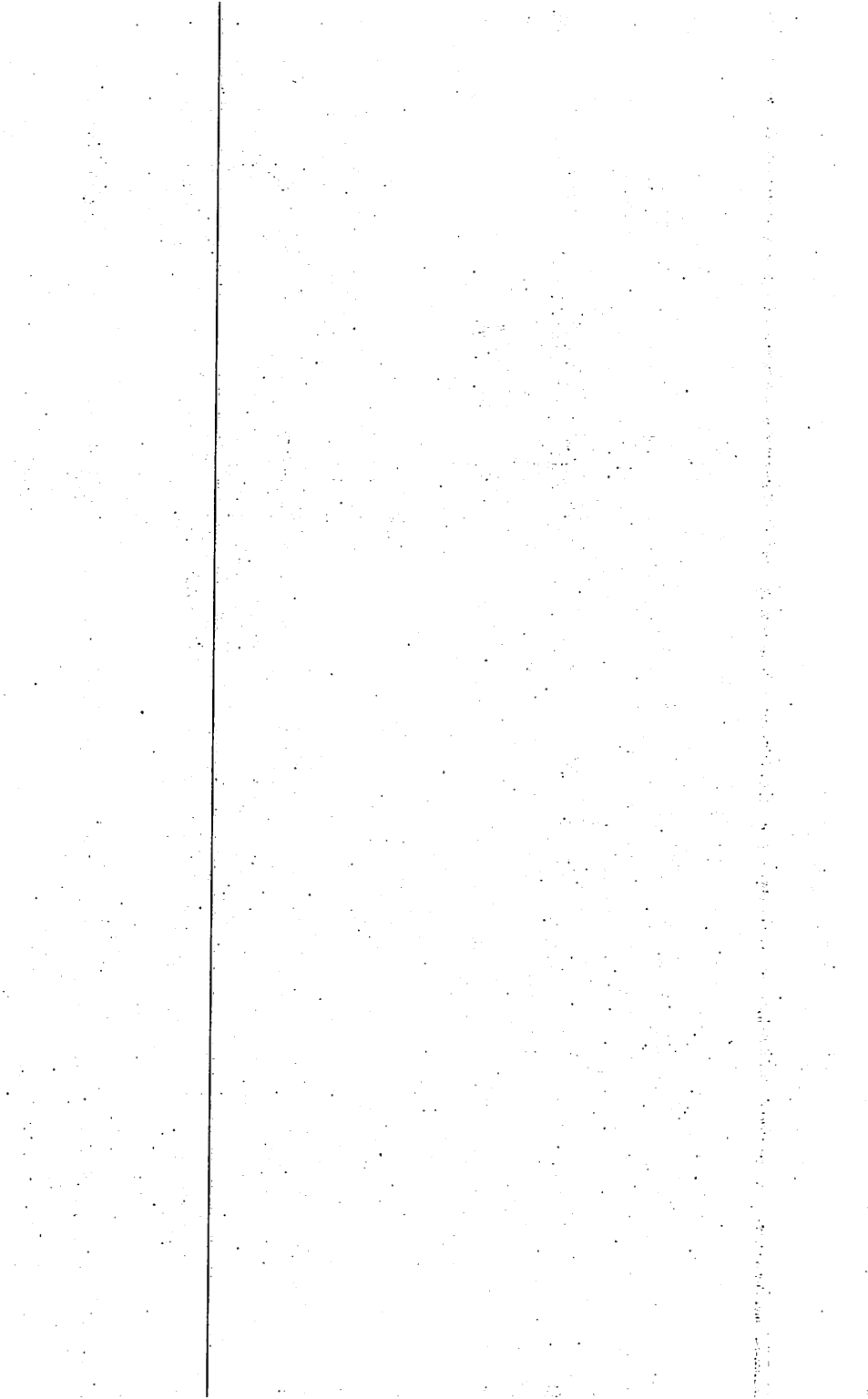
5. Going forward, is there a poem more than any other that you feel might support you or another on their journey? If so, why—in what way?

PART VI

THE SOLITARY LIFE

A Doorway to Heaven





Sheer Presence

When Heaven and Earth
Kiss
in the
Now,
Sparks Fly.

There are
No Two Ways
About it.

Guidance for Meditative Quotes

Being in the now is a gateway. You might think of each meditative quote as a love letter, a gift. Each has been selected with the intention that it may lead the meditator to a deeper wisdom than is first apparent.

For greatest effect, ignore the title which identifies the source of each quote, then read the words without any attempt to recall the contents of the poem from which it came.

Let the quote stand on its own as a 60-second, 30-minute, or one-hour meditation, thus creating anew its source, giving you full ownership of your own poetry, your own life.

Be Mindful
Be Present

MEDITATIVE QUOTES

Book I

The Other Side of Midnight

12/4 I'm 64

Thank you dear God for
my breath, my death,
The cycle of life.

Nine Years Old

Recalling my
feelings into
The now, as
though it were
Yesterday.

Permission Given

I release you
in loving kindness

I Have a Curl

Not one hand
to steady me
Nor a single crumb
along my path.

Auntie Mae

“Today is Monday, tomorrow is Tuesday,
the next day is Wednesday,
The week’s half gone
and I haven’ gotten a thing done”

Recycle, Reclaim

And recycle back, the full
beauty from which we came.

In Life Again

And who shall
 guide the way,
Of a lost soul,
 in the end?

The End of the World

But why do that?
 We might miss the torture of descent,
 the searing of all that is irrelevant.

Safe Passage

We don't always
have to know
the reason why,
We just need to
"Listen up."

An Everlasting Presence

I would never have
known what I
was capable of
Had I not...

Little Gifts

I take 'em
as they come,
My little gifts
one by one.

Soul Food

The kind of love
that feeds the
Soul when everyone
gathers round ...

A Morsel of Memory

To savor every sweet
 and bitter morsel
And too, from whence it came
 and laid to rest, the same.

The Pitfalls of Our Past

Or walk a clean
 and clearer path
And gently love
 all those who pass this day.

The (Last) Word

Diversity is
 our salvation,
A balancing act
 of oneness
Through which
 each is made whole.

The Seventh Day

Perhaps they are trying
 to tell us something,
Perhaps we need
 to listen.

A Question Mark

What would happen
if I were to pass over
The threshold of fear, into
the land of peace and harmony?

Beyond the Veil

What lies behind
the veil of
Violence, beyond the
scope of love-me-nots?

The Healing Process

All things are
a part of
The healing process—
even the wounding.

Wounding and Healing

...mostly I wounded,
because I had not the courage,
to do my own healing.

For Cryin' Out Loud

I am
where I am.

The Matter of Life and Death

Fear not,
 though life will take its toll,
Life too will cast the mold
 of hopes and dreams,
 its promise to unfold.

Feeling Like a Rose

This rose will be sustained
‘til its full bloom weeps,
at season’s end.

Feeling Like a Rose

The nourishment of being
leaves nothing left to fear.

Fireflies in the Night

In the midst
of darkness,
Comes clear the light.

The Greatest Gift

Sometimes the greatest gift
is the smallest act of kindness.

Just Imagine

A SMILE, even if only for a brief moment,
reminds me that I am not alone in this world.

Two Worlds

I can be
the vehicle of light
OR
a container of darkness.

It's Elemental

Be fluid
Be flexible

It's Elemental

Love matter,
it matters.

Wooden Soldiers

Mother Earth claims
her own
In the end,
one way or another.

The Promised Land

God promises
only
the present moment.

Clear Springwaters

Life flows
in stand still moments,
“Here am I. Here am I.”

The Planetary Poet

(I am) a Child
of the Cosmos
Sent to Care
for every Pearl.

One Moment Pleased

Destiny calls
from a long
distant past.

Ash Wednesday

Not mine, nor yours,
nor any to possess,
The gift of life,
sheer holiness.

My Calling

Risk taking, faith making
into life
(is my life).

MEDITATIVE QUOTES

Book II

Love Letters to a Mirage in the Desert

Awesome

AWESOME,
When the Now
EXPLODES
And Becomes
ETERNAL

Feel the Pain

I will not fear the pain
of loving you

True Love

True love is
a two way street,
Not a one way
road to Heaven.

A Search for Meaning

So don't be afraid,
It is nothing—
Poof, poof, like a
Cloud of Smoke
In the Sky,
Gone, Gone, Gone...

Out of My Control

It is
out of my control
so
I don't need
to
worry about it,
one way or the other.

The Mystic Life

I plant my feet
firmly
In this now
that has
Presented itself
to me.
I choose the Mystic Life
at the center of my being.

Intensity

The intensity of reality
sustains me
The intensity of truth
keeps me steadfast on my path.

Opening

Being Present
Is all about
Opening,

Truth

Truth is the
Manifest Spirit
of
Reality.

Fear, No-Fear Fear

What I Fear Most
is
Having Nothing
to
Fear.

Be Watchful

Each of us is
as close to death
as the other.

Flawless

I will embrace This Self,
This Presence,
This Everlasting Essence.

Fasting is Okay

... Lent, and
that requires
Giving up something
we crave.

The Waiting Game

Universal Love:
available
to
all people
in
all time
in
everyplace,
waiting
for
me.

The Waiting Game

JUST BREATHE,
BREATHE
IN
UNIVERSAL LOVE
EXHALE COMPASSION

Think, Think

Think about what life could be,
if we would just let go of control.

Think, Think

WAKE-UP, WAKE-UP
for God's sake
OPEN YOUR EYES

The Gift of Life

My
Soul Rests
Where my Breath
Centers

The Gift of Life Postlude

Where the Breath Goes
So Goes the Soul

PART VII

AUTHOR'S WITNESS

In Poetic Terms



About the Author



Author Photo © Harriet Holleman Photography
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Sarah is both a country girl and a global citizen.

She grew up in West Texas desert land and as a child experienced death, both internally and externally. While this deepened her, global experiences as an adult expanded Sarah's consciousness, opening her to the broader realities of desert. This included Australia and village life in Upper Egypt where she and her husband directed a comprehensive village development project.

Returning to Texas in later years, she has had the “time and space of mind” to write poetry, at the same time engaging in practical leadership roles of caring for others. Sarah continues a lifestyle of reaching outward while going inward, perpetuating a rich and satisfying life.

These are a few “facts of the matter” about Sarah’s life. But to tell you who this poet is at heart, a few more of her poems must be shared.

The Listener

I have only been writing poetry
for the most recent one third
of my life. I didn't begin writing
until I had learned how to listen.

Truth Telling

I will never
again explain,
or apologize
for a poem
I have written,
whether the truth
be told—
or not.

No Offense

I can Edit,
but
I will not Censor,
my Poems.

I Write
what
I Write.

My Apologies
to Any
Who might take
Offense.

Playful

Something
very profound
has happened to me.
I can
PLAY.

For the first time
I can
PLAY
without fear
of reprisal.

For the first time
I can
PLAY
without fear of
a heavy heart.

A Playful Poet

I Have Finally
Learned
How to Play.
I
Write Poetry.

Often With
Humor
and
Affection.

A Poem is a Poem is a Poem

If I think I (fully) understand
one of my poems, then
EITHER it is not a poem, OR
I do not fully understand it.

EPILOGUE

Love Letters



A Poetic Presence

(an hourglass)

OPEN

truth
compassion

~

courage
humor

MYSTERY

(a summary)

The Listener

Truth Telling
No Offense

Playful
A Playful Poet

A Poem is a Poem

A Love Letter

You are not alone,
even in the
DESERT

**In Essence
(a meditation)**

OPEN

truth
compassion

~

courage
humor

MYSTERY

LOVE LETTERS presents in fresh, honest, powerful language the classic human "coming of age experience," often understood as the journey from the periphery to the spiritual center and the return to service. Sarah's poems, often enigmatic, but always offered with a mix of generous vulnerability and fearless freedom, beckon the reader's further reflection upon the universal human experience. For me, an added bonus was the methodology of guided reflection Sarah presents that supports both the process of one's "making a poem one's own," and also invites each of us to use poetry as a focus for mindful meditation.

—**Marilyn R. Crocker**, Ed D
Educational and Organizational Development Consultant

Sarah Buss takes us to the inner recesses of our longings, fears, discoveries, wishes, loves, losses and finds a center. It is not a still center, rather it is one around which the ballerina dances with fine balance. Realizing that we are eternally here, there and everywhere, she offers a way of living beyond restraint in the banquet that is life.

—**Herman Greene**,
President of the Center for Ecozoic Societies

As you begin *Love Letters to a Mirage in the Desert*, prepare to journey with poet Sarah Buss into your own meditative spaces. We all read or see things that move us deeply, yet too often their profound message remains hidden. Sarah's poems not only provoke personal experiences, her reflective tools allow the reader to explore their layers of meaning.

—**LiDoña Wagner**
Author, *PILGRIMAGE*
Wonder Encounter Witness



Author Sarah H. Buss

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