

# **Sustiva Dreams**

**Dream Poems by Victor Valmore**

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## **Dream Poems by Victor Valmore**

## **Sustiva Dreams**

### **An Introduction**

**Sustiva is the brand name given to the anti retro-viral drug Efavirenz by its manufacturer, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. It is of the class of anti-HIV drugs called non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTI's). One of the exhortations offered as a disclaimer to users is that it may cause unusual, vivid dreams and drowsiness for extended periods of time, therefore it is recommended to be taken at bedtime; a sort of built-in sleeping pill that operates in the background throughout the night. There are other psychological and physical side effects reported by small percentages of control subjects in clinical trials relating to depression, suicidal tendencies, and rashes, but my experience seems to have been limited mostly to the nighttime somnolent side effects.**

**Very early in my use of this drug as part of a combination therapy, I noticed that indeed I did experience vivid dreams, and I secretly became enamored of them. Aside from the sheer enjoyment, and almost illicit levels of occasionally hallucinogenic (or at least as I imagined) effects, I began to notice parts and fragments of my personality floating in and out of my subconscious. Upon sharing some of the dreams with friends and relatives, it became apparent that these were not ordinary recollections from the day, or deep seated yearnings that we can all recognize from our best dreams, but something slightly magnified and purified of intentional direction or coercion. I rediscovered, for example, some of my early childhood dreams of flying which had left me for many, many years. I met my dead father again after a hiatus of decades and he once again told me why he had gone away (he was working for the CIA and I was to tell no one of his visit to me). Even the sexual encounters that occasionally cropped up had an absence of guilt or self-consciousness normally evident in a good Catholic boy like me.**

After months and months of remembering snatches and pieces of the night-before goings on in my brain, only to quickly lose the memory in the light of day, I decided to try and find a way to save some of them, for what purpose I did not, nor do I now, know. Once this decision had been made, however, the next step was to devise the best way of recovering the dreams in writing without resorting to impossibly lengthy recollections of details, ambience and meaning. I had neither the time nor the patience to meticulously describe the settings or the sequence of events in the sometimes meandering thought trains. Nor did I feel that my abilities as a story teller or scene describer would necessarily translate into a meaningful view of what actually flew through my brain.

Instead I adopted the habit of jotting down the basic outline of the most vivid picture that I remembered from the course of the dream. This could be a mere moment in a cause and effect series of events, the kind that we like to savor as a key when returning to a warm bed and attempting to kick-start the dream that we had to abandon due to some interruption or other. Or it could be a simple summary of the action that flowed through the dream. This jotting down business usually occurs on my way to or from the nightly visit to the bathroom that has become a part of the natural aging process for me. Sometimes I can remember the entire dream from just a few words, and at other times I stare in awe at the scrawled message from the night before and realize that I have no idea what I have written, although it may sound intriguing, mysterious and, yes, sometimes bizarre. I continue to hone my skills and practice capturing the right amount of words to jog my memory enough to make some sense of it. In the beginning, I also began to realize that I needed to find a way to distill or repeat the picture without losing its essence.

That is when I decided on two things; all of the dreams would be captured in poetic form, allowing me some license in the distillation process, and all of them would have to fit on a single page, forcing me to honor the commitment of not recreating the entire blessed saga (something which could more appropriately be relegated to short story writing or novelistic

expansions, if I ever felt a particular dream had such possibilities). As I began the task of writing a poem from the scribbles I left on the nightstand or on the computer desk going to or from the bathroom, I also made rules for myself.

Absolute honesty in the telling was paramount; I do not allow myself the luxury of creating something that did not happen in the dream. One of my mentors once told me that a shortcoming in many of my poems was an unconscious attempt to relate what I felt a reader would like to hear or would expect to hear about a particular topic, what a natural reaction would be, given a set of circumstances. I have religiously avoided any such derivative bent.

Never ever would there be an over-working of the poem. It is written, dated and put into the file. This of course runs against my grain; I want to present to the world an educated mien that has cleverly mined the alliterative and probative possibilities. However, as I discovered early on, the unintended side-effect of punching out short little bursts is a more clearly presented personality devoid of adjustments; what you see is what you get.

Many of my dreams defy an actual sequential analysis, presenting instead an impression or representation which I am able to recognize and reproduce. A good example is “The metal we don” in Cocaine Chains Dream becoming “Mourning after Chains” in the final two lines of the poem on page 6. I do not have a clear recollection of where the dream took place topographically but I do know that the imagery of an inescapable imprisonment wrought by uninhibited drug abuse swam mightily into my synapses.

Finally, I am ever conscious of falling into the trap of willing a dream to pop into my rem-brace. If I feel that I have in some way influenced the direction or content of the dream, I chuck it out with all the others that I can’t remember anyway. This may seem to be terribly unscientific but what the hell, I’m not a scientist and this is not an experiment to discover the secrets of the universe. It is an exercise in peeling the onion of

one single man's subconscious as prodded by nightly doses of a known chemical prodder.

Perhaps it will turn out to be nothing more than a slow painful brain defragging that allows me to purge a lifetime of wandering lost neurological idea bytes that would have remained disjointed and unrecoverable anyway; sort of like scheduling your computer to regenerate during the wee hours of the morning when you won't be awake and concerned about all the rearranging that needs to be done to keep things running efficiently. Only heaven help the poor paranoid who happens into the room when the computer is cranking away and dumping loads and loads of memories and roadmaps that might be needed some day to prove that he/she really did do what was necessary to save a life and did not do it out of spite or deliberate, intentional ill-will. I will continue to record the defrags until I am either too bored with the whole idea or no longer have the luxury of time to do so. This could be a week or a lifetime.

Victor Valmore 03/15/2004

## The Morning Stranger

I am a stranger on that chair  
With the familiar embroidery  
I know so well  
From the fabric loft  
We hunted down  
Behind a door where  
Joe sent us  
When we moved in together  
That same chair  
With the black piping  
In a room washed in morning light  
A well-fleshed character  
Reading a novel  
Like an afternoon moon  
Out of a forgotten time

Have you ever had a new lover  
Thrust a hand  
Just where you want it  
With a familiarity  
Not yet earned  
You accept the gesture  
As part of a shared humanity  
Even a stranger  
Can own

I can place  
This gray haired bearded gentleman  
As an acquaintance  
Maybe from childhood  
In the warm kitchen  
Where the men played cribbage  
And smoked cigars  
Or perhaps the seminar  
On total quality assurance  
In Camelback Arizona  
When he wore navy blue blazers  
And knotted red ties  
But right now  
At this moment  
I have forgotten who he is

Victor Valmore 01/31/04

## Cocaine Chains Dream

Your tongue rolls out  
Familiar beat poetry  
I am not able to quote  
But I understand we  
Are both friendly with  
The metal we don  
Through each snort  
Of the dregs from the  
Corners of little plastic  
Bags  
Economy in everything  
Is the watchword  
When we meet in  
Rain soaked gutters  
Clogged with crabgrass  
I feel your thin tight body  
Our erections meet  
Like semi hard  
Businessman handshakes  
Sad  
That we pursue  
A simultaneous equation  
Whose solution lies  
Not in nirvana nips  
Out of single shot bottles  
But shot up sinuses  
With no sense of limits  
And awareness of  
Mourning after  
Chains

Victor Valmore 02/06/04

**Room Temperature Ice**

**Ice which can't be seen  
Coats the wooden floor  
Of a vast room gabled  
With iron trusses  
Underneath the glaze  
Painted stripes define  
The sporting possibilities  
Hockey basketball  
Cheerleading practice  
Quick peeks at thick thighs  
In the showers  
And steamy locker rooms  
Below  
I hug the ice to test  
The slipperiness  
Discover that indeed  
It will sustain  
Double axels triple soucows  
All the wonderful things  
The cold version of ice  
Should maintain  
Except that it just isn't right  
A plastic trumpet with four valves  
In the hands of a five year old  
Who knows the brass  
Is the thing that makes  
Vibrato squeeze tears  
From a heart yearning  
To be milked like a cow  
Dragging heavy udders  
In from the hills**

## Long Lost Cousin John

Long lost cousin John  
You have become impossibly handsome  
In your maturity  
It is highly unusual for me  
To look up into such a face  
I am so totally aware of your height  
And even more aware  
Of your extraordinary kindness

This kindness of yours  
Comes from a proprietary pride  
In your beauty  
I am shamelessly welcomingly  
Allowed to caress the slats  
Along the sides of your back  
But stop with the rubbing  
Well before I embarrass us both

O tall kissing cousin  
Offering the lips to mine  
In your confidence  
You allow one of those touching  
Tender moments you know  
Anyone in their right mind  
Especially fawning grateful me  
Will take to the grave

Victor Valmore 02/07/2004

### **Little Monkey Babies**

**This little thing I hold in my hands  
Is a warm cuddly gorilla guy  
A baby baboon  
With a bald head  
I want to nurture it  
Love it and make it  
Want me  
Like a son's unquestioning love  
In the early years of life  
Before he knows more than Dad  
And can walk away  
From love  
Like leaving the game early  
To go home and fuck a girl  
On the velour couch  
In front of the Corona beer bottle wall**

**Victor Valmore 02/10/04**

## Hacienda by the Sea

I live in a hacienda on the shore  
Where I pretend to be  
A predictor of the tides  
Coming in and out  
Pretend to be a whole lot more  
But I am really just a loser  
Thrown into the ebb and flow  
Of the rocky crags

A hacienda on the shore  
With cantilevered floor  
Out over the ocean blue  
Very aesthetically desirable  
Impractical over the water  
We're setting up  
A performance piece  
That has already been done

Overposturing trite performance  
Mourning language  
Morning performance  
Dive from a platform in the air  
Into a crowd of people  
Who don't know how I do it  
I flap my arms until I rise  
Above it all and float  
Down down down into  
A formal meeting on the ground

Victor Valmore 02/16/04

## Missing the Flight

Rushing again to board an airplane  
Bound for some familiar but  
Exotic place  
All passengers must go through  
Special security and frisking  
My shirt my shirt  
Is taken from me and put through  
A roller which has ruined it  
Stuck in the mechanism  
Like my mother used to have trouble  
With the bed sheets in the old Whirlpool  
So I board the plane  
With just a t-shirt under my jacket  
And shyly find a seat  
Where no one will know  
How I have been stripped  
By the uncaring workers who  
Have no respect for the likes of me

Victor Valmore 02/21/2004

## **Mortars in the Basement**

**Mortars set up deep  
In basement bunkers  
Where the chain of command  
Works its way through  
The ranks of men like me  
Who know only a piece  
Of the plan**

**A piece of a plan would  
Be preferred by us  
As we dutifully repeat  
The coordinates that are called in  
From a field out there  
The timbered roof of our cellar  
Is dark and dingy  
And peppered with bent nails  
That threaten to scrape our scalps**

**We are ready to fire the big guns  
Through the holes in the ceiling  
Our existence is perpetual twilight  
Until that day somewhere in the future  
When we get to wait for transport home  
In a quiet cement station  
Maybe painted white  
Like the kitchen where Ma bakes  
Bread and burns the pancakes**

**Victor Valmore 02/24/2004**

## **Paper Banners**

**I am caught in a squeeze  
To taunt authority  
Or maybe to appease them  
For the PATRIOT ACT  
Requires my response  
My name is printed  
On paper banners  
Victor bin Valmore  
Of course my father would be  
Valmore bin Albert the Baker  
From Quebec  
These flags are meant for many eyes  
Not just the Gestapo  
Around the corner  
Am I mocking the very same  
People I hope to help  
Shall I change my passport  
And driver's license too  
Apply for a new SSN  
Go all the way  
Roman Catholic bin Muslim  
Abou Ben Adam  
May his Jewish tribe increase**

**Victor Valmore 02/25/2004**

## **Soft Mountains**

**Today we are climbing  
Upholstered rocks and cliffs  
With packs on our backs  
And a mission to accomplish**

**Every now and then  
It is necessary to check  
The guide book  
To find the best way to the top**

**The face of our mountain  
Is like an ice age bed  
Of folded over duvets  
And endless eiderdown quilts**

**What we want is the best view  
Not the sport of it that most  
Mountaineers crave  
Our lives are much simpler than that**

**Victor Valmore 02//26/2004**

## Running the Gauntlet

There is nowhere you can  
Any longer  
Avoid the eye of the world  
Two lines of men  
All in rough clothing  
Some in leathers  
Others dressed as mountain men  
Make one poor soul  
Run the gauntlet  
He is beaten by them  
When someone puts tape  
Or putty gum or something  
Over the video lens  
To hide their iniquity  
From the man behind  
The camera obscura  
We wait until we know  
We will get away with it  
Or have the power  
To avoid punishment  
Before we commit our  
Worst sins of deceit  
Dishonesty and sabotage  
The human race  
Means nothing to us  
As long as there is  
No punishment forthcoming  
Even then existence is  
Not getting caught

Victor Valmore 02/29/2004

## Aviary Cum Garden

O God not another gut-wrenching  
Quest  
Forays with wooden stock rifles  
For protection  
We enter an aviary cum garden  
Under repair  
The green growth and old stumps  
Have been cleared  
Pathways marked by walls of dried guano chips  
On end like  
Rosettes in a leaded glass window  
Cross in front of us  
Little guano chip fences separate the field  
Into anthropologic digs  
Work areas being prepared for the coming  
Growing season  
A sudden elation and dancing amidst the shit  
Freely and gaily  
I see you are happy for the joy in me  
And not at all  
Displeased with the desecration of the shrine  
Or the loss of the mission

Victor Valmore 03/04/2004

## **I Went to War in Africa**

**I went to war  
Not with strangers  
But with men all around me  
I know from my life in Africa  
It was very fierce  
Many commands from the generals  
To load and shoot  
Load and shoot the enemy  
At close range  
See the bodies explode  
Behind green fatigues  
The enemies are comrades  
Comrades are enemies  
Everyone is getting hit  
Except me  
In the calm afterwards  
It was the same as ever  
The blood is gone  
The bodies are gone  
My life with my friends in Africa  
Is gone**

**Victor Valmore 03/07/2004**

## You Looked at My Poems

In my twilight dream  
I showed you my poems  
Writings of things  
That have no interest for you  
To your credit  
My interpretation discredit  
You pretended to read them  
I spelled out the punch lines  
For example  
This means I have  
Lost you forever  
Or this one means  
You are a spoiled brat  
There is pain and sorrow  
And joy and wonder  
You only see torture  
And chastisement  
As you feign interest  
Impatient  
To be going to your  
Next appointment

Victor Valmore 03/09/2004

## **Men Wearing Dresses**

**Brocaded dresses and heavy hairdos  
Were all the rage on Bob's Hill  
You and I wandered  
Up and down the dangerous slopes  
In our best finery  
High heel shoes and padded bras  
In the midst of college boys  
Pretending to know what was  
Going on  
Or coming off in the case of the  
Pancake makeup running down  
Our backs from the sweat  
We generated in our exertions  
They don't know what to do  
Or why they're here  
Or how to wear the finery  
That you and I know all about  
These faux devots of androgyny  
So far away from understanding  
Anything about anything**

**Victor Valmore 03/10/2004**

**All Brass Band**

**Our all-brass marching band  
Has stopped along the parade route  
To allow the drum section  
A little extra rehearsal time**

**We are not even remotely ready  
To be seen by the public  
And yet here we are with horns in hand  
Moving smartly down the avenue**

**There are tom-toms and kettle drums  
Snares and tympani on wheels  
The clatter chatter can be heard  
From miles and miles away**

**The drums are loud enough  
To recall the thunder inside my chest  
When as a young boy  
I dared to move to the edge of the sidewalk**

**A little further along  
It is time for the brass to assemble  
Into a giant block of blaring sound  
With high piercing notes from the trumpets**

**Pride of belonging to such a clever bunch  
Moves in all of us like a mother's smile  
Spreading up to the stage  
Where her first born is performing**

**After the parade passes by  
We join the watchers  
Loitering in car parks  
Ready for the long ride home**

**No one says anything  
About the notes that were flubbed  
Or the steps that were missed  
Only that we all did just fine**

**Victor Valmore 03/12/2004**

## Climbing the Pole

You're the one with the knowhow  
The tools for the job  
The chutzpah to be up there  
Waiting for me to climb the pole  
Behind you  
Up the rough wooden surface  
You call down to me  
Why aren't you coming  
I have no hooks  
On my hands and my feet  
Unlike a fly on the wall  
I have no way to keep from  
Sliding backwards  
Splinters are under my skin  
Yet I know you expect  
Me to endure this discomfort  
Even as I am no longer  
On the ascendant

Victor Valmore 03/13/2004

## Thin Mustaches

We're all ready with our  
Thin line mustaches and  
Loose fitting clothes  
That will allow us  
To do flip-flops  
And cart wheels  
In the air

Dressed and pressed  
Like circus performers  
Ready to film the show  
Looking in the mirror  
I may be a little thicker  
Around the middle  
Than allowed

My hair is more fly-away  
And bushy-thick  
Than called for in the part  
The suave new look  
So de rigueur  
Has eluded me  
But I'm still going on the stage

Victor Valmore 03/14/2004

## Death Row

There is great sorrow  
On this death row  
I am one who has  
Received the sentence  
And await only the day

One by one  
The inmates are called  
Strangely enough  
There are some who  
Are regular survivors

Those who have  
Made the necessary plans  
Put money in the bank  
Are destined to be  
Silent observers

I cried for two  
Who did not make it  
To the executions  
Succumbing instead  
To disease or appendicitis

At the end of the day  
We burn the last two  
Christmas candles  
On the eaves  
And mourn my imminent death

Victor Valmore 03/15/2004

## **False Accusation**

**A teacher who I respect  
Has made a terrible error  
I am being punished  
For a false accusation**

**Made to write  
In a marbled cahier  
I circle the phrases  
As directed**

**Over and over  
I am ignored  
I did not do  
What you think**

**I don't  
Deserve  
This  
Punishment**

**Victor Valmore 03/16/2004**

## The HIV Speech

I have cuttings  
From the bridal veil  
In the garden  
To propagate in  
Glass jars on the  
Kitchen table

The alter kockers  
And old ladies  
Are having their tea  
In the parlor  
Where tables are draped  
With white cloths

You announce that  
None of this would  
Happen without me  
I am brought to tears  
Preparing for the speech  
About conditions with HIV

Uncle Harry tells the one  
About the foreign aids  
To great guffaws  
Mostly his own  
The old ladies rue the loss  
Of warm spring days

Soon we will be able  
To open the windows again  
Let in the breeze  
And the fresh air  
To cleanse the house  
Of a long and endless winter

Victor Valmore 03/18/2004

## The Rescue Mission

I have my flak vest  
Which can also be used  
As a parachute  
While we wait patiently  
Atop a familiar tall  
Building

Can we test our 'chutes  
Out the window  
Or should we wait  
For the arrival of the others  
To fly to the place  
We think we will find them

I yearn to be on the way  
To fly the big machines  
And be the heroes  
That make the rescue  
While straps dangle  
Carelessly like broken bras

You know I am competent  
And this is all just nonsense  
Give us control  
To go on patrol  
With no holds barred  
We know how to have fun

That's the trouble  
Isn't it eh  
You and me throughout the years  
We get together now and then  
Like we never parted  
And are children again

Children again in serious man's business

Victor Valmore 03/17/2004

**Lunch with Julia**

**Hello mother-in-law  
Welcome to my dream  
I notice that when we  
Drive in the car  
You toss exorbitant  
Large coins  
At parking attendants  
And newsboys**

**Rather than pleasing  
These people  
You piss them off  
With your largesse  
Unwittingly conferring  
Honorary colonial status  
On the plight  
Of their poverty**

**Now to the restaurant  
In the basement  
Of a mini-mall  
Whose walls are paneled  
In cast-off blond wood  
Polished clean  
While rats scurry  
Off to the corners**

**Why must we sit  
At such a large round table  
Near the door  
We are the only customers  
Anywhere to be seen  
Wouldn't it be  
More comfortable  
To spread out in a booth**

**And by the way  
Have you noticed  
That this is a gay club  
On Tuesdays and Friday  
Evenings  
Or do you only see  
That they have the cheapest  
Tuna salad in town**

**Victor Valmore 03/19/2004**

## The Clarinetist

I stood by the window  
Playing a clarinet  
Tentatively feeling the valves  
And chrome finger pads  
Running along the sides

I played it sweetly  
And then began to hum  
The tunes flowing out of me  
With all the tenderness  
Of an old lover waiting on the porch

You were not surprised  
To hear such sweetness  
And cried with me  
As the instrument  
Flew up and down the scales

Now I'm showing off  
With arpeggios and riffs  
And little forays  
Into jazzy renditions  
That sing quietly from deep inside me

Victor Valmore 03/20/2004

## Facial Massage

The leader of our country  
Is giving field lessons  
For the proper care  
Of the human organism

It entails not only  
Good physical training  
But most impordandly  
How to self-massage a face

You must be aggressive  
With circular strokes  
Round the cheekybones  
On the forehead and jaw

One of the remedial actions  
For a sore face  
Is a swim under the water  
Of a stagnant swamp

The dirtier and the muddier  
The betterer for the facial  
Muscles to become toned  
And the skin to become pink

There is one and only one  
Prescribed method  
Which is part of any good soldier's  
Daily routine

Just follow the instructions  
Carefully  
To be accepted in the  
Highest echelons

Victor Valmore 03/17/2004

**Steel Beehives**

**Glittering Brasilia  
City in the sky  
Cluttered with the  
Flotsam and jetsam  
Of humanity  
So many people  
So many immigrants  
Forced to live  
In stainless steel beehives  
Hung along winding ramps  
Circling modern towers  
Of Babel  
Gigantic anthills  
Dotting the green landscape**

**Just enough room  
In the hives  
For children to sleep  
Behind bolted doors  
Little birds captured  
In dark metal cages  
Adults on floor mats below  
A step up for many  
Who would otherwise  
Be lost in the jungles  
Of Laos and Cambodia  
Or worse  
The canyons of Hong Kong  
And the streets of Lahore**

**One understands  
How we have come  
To this state  
Of affairs  
The only protection  
From an evil  
Polluted  
Terror driven  
World  
Where sanctity of life  
Has no currency  
Preservation  
Of same  
The only goal**

**Victor Valmore 03/22/2004**

## Summer Chalets

Millionaire ski chalets  
In the dead of summer  
Cast long shadows  
In dark glens  
And root-clogged  
Driveways

Strange constructions  
Of Gaudi-like spires  
And unfinished gargoyles  
In raw concrete  
Seem out of place  
For any season

Yet here in the snow belt  
These spores of wealth  
Tossed onto the landscape  
Like empty food containers  
Along the interstate  
Own their legitimacy

One has only to add  
A few feet of packed powder  
And subtract  
The summer birds and  
The hard-won flora  
To imagine why they are here

Victor Valmore 03/25/2004

## The Cripple

I am hobbled by the belief  
That you will see me struggling  
Look look I can hardly stand  
Never mind move forward  
With two rubber tipped sticks  
To support my quavering frame

If you see me like this  
Maybe you will believe  
And leave me alone  
If you are convinced  
That I really cannot walk  
Your gaze will fall elsewhere

The power of suggestion  
Is an amazing thing isn't it  
I never took cripple lessons  
Nor learned from a true hopeless one  
Yet here I am straining every muscle  
Just to stay erect what an act

How long will I be able to fool you  
High up on your mahogany dais  
How long can I hope  
You will not see the ruse  
And send me to the other line  
Where doomed liars shuffle in chains

If I scramble over the bodies of dead children  
Shove past foul-breathed elders  
Then I might be the afflicted one  
My soul truly beyond healing  
No further need to prove myself  
Who wouldn't be convinced by such a performance

Victor Valmore 03/28/2004

## The Mural

The rich lady has a house so big  
The lower story has been painted  
In a huge mural by an honored artist  
Whose pastoral scene can be enhanced  
By music of any sort particularly jazz  
And a few musicians have been chosen

Gratis we have assembled in the proscenium  
A trumpet a clarinet and drums  
To provide a background for the colorful vista  
Worthy of Diego Rivera which has unfolded  
For the partygoers arrayed in armchairs  
In the great hall facing a framed countryside

Colors are sometimes day-glo  
Other times like tobacco-stained oils  
Dragged out of the attic after retirement  
From forty years of duty in the entrance  
Of a men's club somewhere in the ratty depths  
Of nineteenth century London

We are wandering minstrels for the rich guests  
Who are mingling with the artist in the parlor  
Huzzahs from the Pooh-Bahs oohs and aahs  
From the crowd of merrymakers barely listening  
To the complicated riffs and drifts of our music  
As the fantastic painting continues to make itself known

Victor Valmore 03/30/2004

**Momma and Poppa Bear**

**Opulent palace in the mountains  
More like a California movie mogul's  
Idea of a cabin in the redwoods  
Baby bear comes to visit  
Very affectionate and does not  
Want to leave**

**It occurs to all of us at the same moment  
This cuddly thing has a mother  
And maybe a poppa too  
Who will miss him soon  
We need to find a way out of here  
Isn't there a car up in the driveway**

**The problem is the gorgeous pool  
And the seaside view  
Which keeps diverting attention  
From the need to flee  
Anxiety heightens as each one of us  
Forgets for a moment the danger**

**Why can't you focus on this one thing  
Get yourself out of the pool  
No time for walking along the sandy shore  
It isn't the big bad wolf who's coming  
It's the goddam woolly parents  
With their teeth and claws and bad breath**

**Victor Valmore 04/02/2004**

## Missing the Flight II

The old routine of waiting  
To be processed for the flight  
Down a winding back staircase  
With pink and brown floor tiles  
Chipped on the edges  
Where protective aluminum strips  
Try to contain thousands of footsteps

Out to the hangar for last minute  
Boarding instructions  
No you can't go look for your suitcase  
If it has been missed on this flight  
It will be on the next one  
You are lucky to be here where are the others  
Your friends and coworkers are late

Of course they're late  
This is the biggest cluster fuck  
Since Jesus invented little liver pills  
Or some such mysterious miracle  
How can you expect anyone to know  
How to navigate the system  
When you don't even know the location of the plane

Victor Valmore 04/03/2004

## The Harley-Davidson Store

There is a Harley-Davidson store  
On the hill in this posh neighborhood  
Located in the midst of staid old institutions  
Open to shoppers from all walks of life  
Embedded inside is a five star restaurant  
With French-speaking waiters  
Who have a penchant for fast machines  
And faster life styles

Seated alone at a table in the center of the action  
Is an elderly gentleman who needs the facilities  
Asks Gaston in halting words for the WC  
Venez avec moi mon vieux says the lad  
Who accompanies him down the hall  
To a room which obviously has more to it  
Than a few urinals and graffittied stalls  
A place where the true meaning of HOG can be found

Up on the chromed monster in a fantasy of  
Rough highway winds blowing over young limbs  
Before dinner martinis or some other drug at work  
Drop your drawers old man and bend over  
Feel the cool garlicky breath of bronzed garcons  
Ripple through the hairs on your bony buttocks  
Blowing your anus into a puckered ancient bronze coin  
Your face flushed with the rushing highway tides

Victor Valmore 04/04/2004

### Too-big Treehouse

An overbuilt treehouse  
 Is like an old man's body  
 Too overloaded with life's adornments  
 Years of caring and improving  
 Weighted down with impossible demands  
 Sad creaking boughs no longer  
 Supporting over-zealous add-ons and uprights

We are in our treetop aerie  
 The beginning of another long summer season  
 With the fat robins and songbirds  
 Shunning upper branches  
 Now denuded from the malnutrition  
 Forced on the poor tired organism  
 By countless nail punctures and cross-ties

Weighted down like a jungle porter  
 Destined for a life of hard labor  
 A life foreshortened by the impossible weight  
 Of mindless expansionism  
 The only goal one more season  
 Of joyful independence and crass enjoyment  
 Escape from cares and woes awaiting us down below

This nocturnal visitor to my warm dreams  
 An always welcome friend  
 Is telling me I think finally  
 That this is not just a loss of innocence  
 It is that look back normally reserved for the time  
 Closer to death  
 Still peopled by those who enjoyed it with me  
 Those who have grown away like the tree that has finally died

We boldly test the poor branches  
 Which shake and shudder with our stomps  
 On the floor in the room  
 Already dangerously tested  
 By years of collecting bits and boards  
 The words quietly repeated at the bedside  
 I don't think he's going to last much longer  
 At least we have time to prepare ourselves

Victor Valmore 04/05/2004

## Falling Off the Perch

Once the decision is made  
There is no turning back  
No reason just now to  
Go looking for demons

Those who would tell you  
That a fall from grace  
Is not such a bad thing  
Are all lying dying neighbors

Everyone is doing it  
It can't be so bad  
So why am I sad  
About losing my place

Ah and a hard-won place at that  
Amazing how easy to give it up  
Less pain than offering a seat  
To the crazy old lady on the bus

How long now before it starts  
The resignation surprising  
Even to a jaded old piece  
Of antique gold jewelry like me

Within moments it's in my brain  
Like it never left me alone  
I can smell it and taste it  
Even before I'm wasted

The rest of the year  
Stretches out in front  
With a mountain to climb  
Across from the cave-in

No thoughts for the work ahead  
Nothing more than daily bread  
For his royal highness  
The lowness chased away for a while

Victor Valmore 04/06/2004

### Compliments of the Chefs

The chefs-in-training sent me  
A wonderful sampler plate  
Onto which I lowered my hungry face  
To taste one each of the deep-fried  
Unidentifiable Asian delicacies

We were seated in a cavernous restaurant  
With rough-hewn crossties  
And brown slats on a white background  
Like the faux-Tudor found in abundance  
On the streets of Scarsdale

This food from the chefs was deemed by all  
To be the best of the Orient  
A token of affection for the special guest  
With the understanding that like all things in life  
What you get is a pale reflection of the real thing

Victor Valmore 04/07/2004

## Sizzling Coke

It started out with just a couple of drinks  
Bosom buddies from another time  
And another place  
Now your spouse is watching us warily  
Maybe even disgustedly  
As we search the house for a line or two

Everyone seems to know so they are hiding it from us  
Everyone seems to also secretly want us to fall  
Join them back in the trenches  
Like the good old days of endless highs  
I'm insisting to know where it's kept  
No more fooling around guys

There it is out in plain sight  
I can see the dregs and powder on the mirror from here  
Some kind of new container with a cover  
To stash the stash should an emergency arise  
While unfolding the thing and drawing the lines  
The coke becomes all wet and runny and useless

Panic is setting in this isn't fair  
Not only will I not get my share everyone else is screwed  
Can't figure out what's happening here  
Why is the sweet bright powder turning to mush  
Maybe I'm the culprit is it my tears falling gently  
The first few raindrops sizzling on a summer pavement

## Old Larch Trees

The most noticeable of the spring trees  
Are the denuded larch pines  
Not yet fulfilling the hopes of a new season  
Taking shape all around the compound

Both of us have agreed it is especially  
Enjoyable to be here when the master is away  
We can see what he has never seen  
The joys and wonder of untouched nature

Over near the cabin with the peeling logs  
We have relieved our bladders  
Now we can explore all the places  
We remember from our grammar school days

I want to show you the boat dock and the hidden chapel  
The little rock outcropping in the pond  
Surrounded by ancient blueberry bushes  
Dipping their budding leaves into the rippling water

But the only things that make an impression on me  
Are the ghostly gray frames of the naked larches  
Standing together in a bunch of looming grandfathers  
All knobbly and bumpy and hungry for lunch

The unfortunate name given to these trees  
Speaks quietly of some kind of illicit behavior  
Or a crime that is reserved for the hushed tones  
Of the old crones knitting in the back row of the courtroom

Victor Valmore 04/09/2004

**Cold as Hell**

**I wonder if I will ever be able to say  
I made a difference be remembered  
For doing something anything  
Certainly nothing will happen unless  
I get out of this place  
Where there is no recorded history  
Where we are sent at dark  
To live through the bitter nighttime freeze**

**Now I am awake in an underground hole  
After sleeping in a special tent chamber  
Beneath eiderdown quilts  
Warmed by hidden furnaces  
Suffered with physical inspections  
By suspicious doctors  
Who check our ability to survive  
In the cold but sunny world above**

**The yellow-dotted line on which we wait  
For the next available MD  
To listen to heartbeats and analyze  
Cold-bloodedness  
Directs those who pass  
To a freedom door I want to reach  
To leave the darkness and the cold  
Forever**

**Another fear inches its way  
Through the minds of the waiting sleepers  
What is it these men and women  
Who inspect us and make judgments  
Know about the upper world  
To which they are sending their selections  
And why don't we know  
Any who have come back to tell us about it**

**Victor Valmore 04/11/2004**

## Howling Dogs

A pair of dogs in the yard  
Refuse to stop howling and misbehaving  
They have made me so angry  
I want to string them up with a rope  
And hang them from the old clothesline trestle  
Until they learn some manners

As if a couple of dumb animals  
Have any more brains than the person  
Who would do such a thing to them  
As if my uncontrolled vicious anger  
Can imbue them with an understanding  
Which is not in their nature  
And would serve no purpose other than to please me

Sad to say I don't even care if they don't understand  
I want to hang them anyway  
Watch them squirm and whimper  
Make them suffer for having the gall  
To think that they can just howl and growl  
Unchallenged and indiscriminately  
No one said life is fair let alone a dog's life

Victor Valmore 04/12/2004

## The Buick

This shiny new vehicle  
Right out of the box  
Carries with it more than  
Just a ride from here to there  
It is the manhood emblem  
Most sought after  
By executives and pimps  
To show the world  
That we mean business

It's time to take the beast  
To the carwash  
Where it has never been before  
Therefore necessary to trim  
The wide edges with  
Acetylene torches  
A circumcision of sorts  
Into the culture of  
Bright chrome and metal

Where is it written  
A big car endows masculinity  
You often see elderly couples  
He at the wheel she at the heel  
Even younger country club types  
Who swagger with the bigness  
Have we exported this cause  
For admiration around the world  
With the rest of our consumer nonsense

I am proud to be the owner  
My hips are looser now that I have it  
I only wear designer labels  
When I am the pilot  
My associates see what I am  
By what I own  
The world bows down before me  
Doors are opened deals are done  
Even my poor dead mother believes it

Victor Valmore 04/14/2004

**Glitter Balls**

**Mirrored dance hall balls  
Hanging from the ceiling  
Of every Elk's and Moose Lodge  
Serving generations of wedding parties**

**Fascinating faceted jewels  
Sometimes allowed to swing freely  
Cast pinlights to challenge the most  
Elaborate computer generated lasers**

**What can you report from the last century  
Or from the last high school prom  
The mother of the bride  
Shimmies out of her panties**

**The class brain suffers mightily  
When her menses decide to erupt  
In the middle of the most promising  
Evening of her heretofore lonely tenure**

**Family scars we wish could remain hidden  
Shine in the light of your mocking glitter  
Bullies emboldened by the clubby light  
Slink like nightcrawlers on a wet August lawn**

**Now I am dodging the swinging arc  
Of a glitter ball run amok  
Hardly concerned that it will strike me soon  
I have eyes in the back of my head**

**I know what you are up to there on the ceiling  
How you have tempted and taunted  
And ruined the party for so many of us  
You won't get me with your promises**

**Oh no I am way ahead of your prismatic magic  
If I wanted that kind of help in my life  
I know many other places to get it  
Your tricks will not work on me**

**Victor Valmore 04/15/2004**

## Moving the Circus

Part one is the loading of the entire circus  
Onto a train at the siding  
Tents and carriages and arcades  
In the front cars with the engine  
Elephants snakes lions and tigers  
Towards the back  
Away from harm's way  
All done efficiently and safely  
The plans call for exact fit  
Of each component  
So that at the next town  
The parts can be reassembled at dawn  
Next comes the R and R  
For all the crew  
The young ones have been warned  
To stay away from the drugs  
I am drawn to the same bundle of bungalows  
Surrounded by little sauna pools  
Lots of nooks and corners  
Where one can have an illicit snort or two  
Robert Downey Jr is with us  
As are a bevy of blonde Heathers  
And I am the one with the strength  
To lead the purge of the little glass vials  
Not really I have saved the dregs  
At the bottom of one in my side pocket  
Don't know yet just where or when  
But it is in the works  
We are spread out among the Jacuzzis  
Separated by thin cardboard walls  
On call for a photo shoot  
Everyone on best behavior for the cameras  
The ringmaster makes the rounds  
Wants to see the contents emptied  
Proof positive of our purity  
My little secret kept warm in my palm

Victor Valmore 04/19/2004

## **Saved By the Boat**

**Catastrophe arrived on the quay  
The only way to escape  
Is by boat on the high seas**

**All are nonchalant about it  
Having a hearty breakfast  
Before setting off**

**Our little yacht is anchored  
In a slip among canals  
A virtual Venice in the suburbs**

**Once on board it is decided  
To try and outrun the tsunami  
Ride it like a surfer on a curl**

**We have beat the storm  
And are cruising gently  
In water calm as mother's arms**

**Sunrise beckons a swim  
Among a few bobbing dories  
Our mainsail a butler awaiting orders**

**O the feeling of leaving a warm bed  
With no cares save finding grace  
In another day dawning**

**The crimes of battle  
The shame of survival  
Forgotten in the rolling wake**

**Victor Valmore 04/20/2004**

## Living With You

I take back what I said about living with you  
 It is not like walking through a minefield  
 In some forgotten Serbian village  
 On the edge of hidden mass gravesites  
 Where old women finger their rosary beads  
 Cold sinister winds flip the frayed edges  
 Of kerchiefs made in the last century  
 When colors were brighter fabric not so dear  
 And the fear of losing limbs was everywhere

Living with you is sitting on a wooden bridge  
 Warmed by the sunlight of a spring morning  
 Feet dangling over the cold crystals of snowmelt  
 Rushing beneath the graying boards  
 Before the overhead trees have sprouted  
 Their leaves and dappled the scene  
 Lulled once again by unkept promises  
 Followed by the shock of a hand from below  
 That grabs an ankle and won't let go

I take back what I thought about living with you  
 It is not walking too close to the jungle trail  
 Where an enemy waits in ambush  
 For one of those failures of judgment  
 That haunts every step in the woods  
 For years to come and I am forever  
 Startled by an innocent grass snake  
 Drawn to the rocks made bare  
 By generations of gentle footfalls

Living with you is being on vacation  
 On the way to another exotic destination  
 The swimming cozzies folded neatly  
 Among the few warm weather clothes  
 Stored in the checked luggage in the hold  
 Ray-bans and SPF15 in the carry-on  
 Dreaming of sand when the announcement comes  
 All passports will be collected by the masked gunman  
 Moving roughly up the aisle

Living with you is one of those dreams you forgot to finish  
 Upon awakening gray characters run away hide refuse  
 To give up the narrative lost in mid-stutter  
 That uncomfortable land born of trying too hard  
 Expectant gazes rob the thought train at gunpoint  
 A piss that wants to be but for the audience watching  
 Dreams lost like memories through a slotted spoon  
 Living with you is as unendurable as life itself  
 Why would anyone want to do such a thing

Victor Valmore 04/21/2004

### Auto Graveyard

Modern art so-called by those of us  
 Who are not aficionados  
 Is sometimes difficult to understand and appreciate  
 The process itself being of great importance  
 As is the context and the germination  
 Do not despair if it is not your cup of tea  
 There are degreed minions who know more than you and me

An automobile park amidst a grove  
 Of thin-leafed trees  
 Presenting their own dappleness  
 Has an installation of partial cars  
 And trucks truncated by hacksaws  
 Cut like butchers' meat  
 Childrens' toys stuck in the hills of a sandy beach

What a wonderful trick on the unwary parkers  
 Thrown into confusion  
 By the appearance of a motor graveyard  
 Actually the joke is on the artist  
 No one particularly cares  
 Interested only in squeezing into the precious few spaces  
 Between leprositic sedans

So much of our busy lives  
 Being overburdened by hidden cameras  
 And reality bites in the ass  
 It is positively liberating to ignore the absurdity  
 Of two thousand pounds of steel and plastic  
 Pushing its way into the tarmac  
 Embedded like war journalists in Iraq

Without a second thought to the possibility  
 That the time effort and money  
 Used to satiate the artistic palate of one egocentric aesthete  
 Could have fed a family of eighteen or so  
 For a year or so  
 Could have buried a few hundred genocide victims in a mass grave  
 I park my car in the last available slot and slowly walk away

Victor Valmore 04/26/2004

## **Rollicking Soldiers**

**Rows of soldiers meet and overrun each other  
Time and time again yours on that side mine on this  
We accept the only outcome  
Never win the war just fight to the death**

**Is this what we want for our people  
To clash and regroup clash and regroup  
Until soldiers lie down and the sun also no longer rises  
Stop before the generals call the next charge**

**There are ancient traditions at work  
Prescribing the honorable sacrifice  
Untouchable ways as holy as a genuflect in the aisle  
And as unimportant as a cotillion bow tie**

**Get down from your minarets and your altars  
And your high-minded pulpits  
Leave those holy rites and mouldy mountain ledges  
That blind us with black rags of self deception**

**Or is this what we want  
To accept it as passively as a daily commute  
So that it can be over and done with  
We can say that we defended our own**

**Victor Valmore 04/28/2004**

## Steeple

Remember the days when everyone walked  
And everyone knew Val at the store  
This was a bustling city to the children  
If you needed to be somewhere  
You took out the bicycle and pedaled across town  
To places that were as foreign as the tomb of Ozymandias

Now there are cars in every driveway  
Plastic toys dot the yards once reserved for spring bulbs  
The barn where the rag man  
Fed oats to his horse  
Now houses a gleaming red Corvette  
With a roof that comes off in good weather

The three churches are mostly empty  
On Sunday mornings  
Well-trained patiently-tolerated altar boys  
Have been replaced by older men  
And women with short clipped hairdos  
The altars a hive of competitive devotion

The nearer to the ground the closer to God  
Age removes what an inch or two in height  
We can bury the shrinking elders who have lost their way  
But what do we do with the cavernous hulks  
Of the graying churches too expensive to heat in winter  
And emptied of supplicating summer sweat

Victor Valmore 04/30/2004

**Retrenched**

**It doesn't mean they gave me a new raincoat  
Although the weather for quite some time after  
Was rather wet and melancholy  
Nor does it mean the yard received  
Brand new asparagus beds to match  
The furrows that appeared on my forehead**

**It rained in my heart like it rained on the town  
My jokes became louder hale and heartier  
While the silence in my soul  
Scarcely responded to God's little joys  
Scattered about the springtime paths  
Like the jack-in-the-pulpit that tried to speak to me**

**Answering a lack of morality is certainly a challenge  
When that same catechism wrote my way  
Among the flashy cars and three bedroom homes  
That hosted cocktail parties for other worshippers  
Sucking olives from the bottom of the good glasses  
Counting hits to a portfolio not yet under siege**

**What can be done with this rage that seethes  
And boils with echoes of eyes that look away  
Seeing the fear that they could be next  
Does little to help refute the depth of the betrayal  
This is not a detour it is a dead end street  
You either suck the gas pipe or get a new religion**

**Victor Valmore 05/06/2004**

**Killer Wave**

**Waiting on the shore  
Waiting for the tsunami  
Knowing that there is no escape  
Knowing how it feels to die  
Finding peace in the swirl of water  
Finding myself miraculously alive  
Thinking about the close call  
Thinking that I should be dead  
Remembering those who didn't make it  
Remembering that you were not here  
Wishing that you were  
Wishing I could be mourning you instead**

**Victor Valmore 05/08/2004**

**Capetown Manse on the Hill**

**Our search for the best lot  
On which to build a new home  
Has brought us to this precarious corner  
On the edge of an embankment overlooking the town**

**It is perfect for the view  
Certainly no one could imagine  
Another building popping up to hide the scene  
Of western ocean horizon on the brush-covered hillside apron**

**There is room for the pool  
A garage for lawn mowers and several cars  
Maybe servants' quarters out back behind the rise  
Beyond the wrought iron fence keeping the masses at bay**

**The age old question  
Whether to have the view or be the view  
Carries no weight in the deliberations at hand  
Stake the territory like squatters with a little gold in the pan**

**What sense is there to consider  
Whether there is happiness to be found  
In the establishment of an exciting new homestead  
When all the value is in the hardscrabble ground on the hill**

**Better still with a fevered brow  
Look at the swarms along the avenues below  
Searching for the same investment opportunity  
If we let go and walk away this chance is gone forever**

**So let us stop right here and now  
Start the digging and the defacement  
Build on this spot that we have found today  
Stay in place unhappy if need be until value comes to pay**

**Victor Valmore 05/09/2004**

### The Blind in the Ruin

We knew we were living dangerously  
In a treehouse hidden in an abandoned grove  
But as long as we remembered  
There is safety in numbers  
The enemy seemed not to be there

It was when I left you alone  
Among green sighing boughs  
To follow the others to safety on the hill  
I heard singsongy sounds crawling along the path  
Rebels approaching from the rear

I carried away a moss-covered relic  
A pouncing rabbit on a door-stop wedge  
I believed to be an ancient talisman or at least  
A valuable artifact that needed to be with me  
Shoved down into my pocket for safekeeping

First concern was that you had no pillow  
Or place to lay your head in the moonlight  
Then the fear that I would not be back  
Before you met the embodiment of those voices  
Menacing the peace of ancient ropy jungle ruins

Hesitation put me in a crouch in the bushes  
Fingered the mossy surface of the stone  
Kept me quiet encircled by my arms  
As I waited for the black pajamas to pass and  
Turned away from you and the house in the tree

Victor Valmore 05/11/2004

### The Cy(r)cle

A dry run of the script reveals  
 Those years of plodding through the process  
 Who wrote this piece and why is it felt  
 A reconstruction will in any way  
 Contribute more than artfully using up the time

Read the directions it calls for supermarket trips  
 Shopping among familiar aisles  
 Placing items carefully for two reasons  
 One so as not to crush and ruin the freshness  
 Secondly to economize on (c)artspace

Why so you don't look like a consuming pig  
 Or because an ordered life is a life worth living  
 All hidden away behind the real purpose  
 Careful handling of comestibles lining them up  
 Like soldiers guarding the almost forgotten traumas

This so-called process of reliving the thing  
 Is it better than the processing of cheese  
 Or canned meat soaked in its own self-indulgent juices  
 One thing is sure you have done this before  
 And absent (un)lucky events will do it again

So the director says go and the cameras roll  
 Try to stay in the frame and move slowly  
 But not so slowly you lose the momentum  
 That has to be regained by another body blow  
 Complacency once again overtaken by events bigger than you

Do the dairy aisle while there is still room for the milk  
 Fresh fish is last so you don't gag on the stink  
 Or the ice cream that might melt before it reaches the freezer  
 Pile up this hard-won knowledge that has no school  
 If you lose your place go back to page thirteen

Where your notes remind you why this is done  
 You're not going to starve nor will you become famous  
 But at least you have a way of remembering  
 Where things are and why they are needed  
 If for no other reason than to use up the time

Cut cut cut try it again folks  
 This time remember to think about how awful it was  
 As if this building has a way to make me forget  
 This is not your analyst's couch on an upper floor  
 It is just another trip to the grocery store

Victor Valmore 05/18/2004

## Time To Go Home

Who's driving  
Where's the dog  
I guess the party's over  
Everyone seems to be collecting things

What day is it  
What time is it  
Do I live here and do I have a coat  
I think I lost track of myself again

I seem to recall the dog was floating in the pool  
Or maybe it was just wishful thinking on my part  
I do know one thing for sure  
That tall guy with the satin pants maybe needs my help

Did I embarrass myself  
If not do I have another chance to do so  
Can we go back and let me fondle you near the bonfire  
God I hope we didn't burn too much of the furniture

Whose house did you say this was  
Who are all these people covered with scented powder  
Old white guys wearing blond bimbos  
Bitches from bulimic hell clutching oversized Gucci bags

Sometimes the best part of the party  
Is saying goodbye at the door  
Knowing that you will never see them again  
Stealing little favors wrapped in crepe for your next dream

Victor Valmore 05/26/2004

## What Me Worry

Each dog has been trained  
To stay on the path  
Ahead of his horse  
To lead it  
Riotously through the woods

Once in a while  
One of the canines  
Loses his follower  
And finds himself leading  
The wrong horse down the wrong trail

Our lives crisscross  
As our mentors borrow the lead  
From conflicting directions  
Sometimes we know where we're headed  
And sometimes we don't

When the dog slobbers along  
Mindless to the loyalty  
His followers blindly display  
No one really notices or really cares  
Because the hunt is still on

The new path and the new dog  
Are no different than the ones before  
Lucky for us that the more intelligent riders  
Know when to sound the shrill whistle  
To get them back on track

However it really makes no difference  
To the dog or the horse  
The only one affected by all the careful attention  
Could gain just as much back home by the fire  
Thinking about staying the course

Victor Valmore 05/28/2004

**Do-gooders in Heaven**

**It was a rough night  
What with the neighbors  
Letting out their ferret-dogs  
To poop and piss in the dooryard  
And our erstwhile caregivers  
Showing us how to live  
With our diseases**

**Treat me like a child  
Tell me that I shouldn't worry  
About the little sausage creatures  
Spreading dirt and germs  
After all its outdoors isn't it  
They're tiny little turds too**

**We have done tests  
On your viral load and T-cells  
The good news is your architecture's fine  
In fact we are all very proud of you  
You probably won't die within the week  
We expect you however to decline**

**That extra piece of pie  
And less of the animal fat in your diet  
Would be nice for your rotundity  
A delicate balance in all things  
Is what we're aiming for here  
Health for the entire organism**

**Funny the way you have associated  
Certain physical traits  
With my health and well-being  
Like wearing my heart on my sleeve  
As a measure of aortic performance  
Shoulder hunching a sign of imposture**

**Can't I just be left alone  
With my despicable devices  
Let me be what my body wills me to be  
While you and your Florence Nightingales  
Run errands for the doctors ensuite  
Who in truth only want your pink lace panties**

**Victor Valmore 05/30/2004**

## Assassins

All through the stomach heaving night  
Assassins come and assassins go  
Waiting in long dark corridors  
For the passage of a target  
No one is certain who is marked  
As plans change faster than doomed hours  
Falling into the abyss of yesterday  
Now it is him and all are in agreement  
Then another head carries a greater price  
Assassinness itself gains importance over the deed  
Actual executions live in gauzy shrouds  
Whose trained whiteness wrap themselves  
In a rapid succession of practiced movements  
Knives across throats silenced barrels at the brain stem  
Wires twisted into slim aluminum canisters  
Acid down a gullet nightmare sleeper holds  
This is the excrescence flowing in the gutters  
Leading to those who have used me badly

Victor Valmore 06/02/2004

## Toys for Tots

**Children learn to check for signs of approval  
Before becoming attached to a new toy  
If parents show too much interest too early  
It is taken as unbridled encouragement  
And therefore the thing is probably boring**

**Better to wait for signals that convey discomfort  
If not outright horror and dismay  
Then the toy probably has the right amount of sadism  
The child may safely identify in an unwanted way  
Create an attachment that mocks parental discretion**

**Thus we have set the scene for a relationship  
Where the outward goals of both parties  
Are subverted by the inner goals of the souls  
Finely crafted by each others' experiences  
Such that individuality is born of subversion**

**Kids, what's the matter with kids today  
Don't they know it's for their own good  
Under analysis parents admit to fierce pride  
In having spawned such independent creatures  
While in public they loudly reject the toy**

**Victor Valmore 06/10/2004**

## Closing Up Shop

The old grocer Mr. Percy  
Is closing his store  
After a lifetime of running the slicer  
And throwing fresh sawdust  
On the floor at sunrise  
When the meat truck parked in the alley  
To load big silver carcass hooks in the walk-in cooler

People are willing to pay top dollar  
For those hard-to-find items  
The pickled lamb's tongues and pig's feet  
Which provided incredulous stories  
For children who dared to peek  
Into the jars lined up on the shelves  
While Mrs. Percy wrapped the meat in waxed paper and string

Over in the corner along the rough board wall  
You can find the flypaper that spirals  
Out of greasy thumbtacks trapping insects  
As old as those frozen in chunks of amber  
Dug out of a Sonoran desert dune  
And the black pug-nosed dog on a dusty rug  
Braided by a Mohawk on a lost trail up in the mountains

After the floor is swept one last time  
Where will they go these fixtures of my youth and dreams  
Off to visit distant relatives in a house on wheels  
Or to a quiet place with shuffleboards and pinochle decks  
Who will warm these brown walls grown accustomed  
To their smiles and patience and a piece of penny candy  
For the long walk back home

Victor Valmore 06/13/2004

**Hetero Visit**

**I dream a dream  
A dreamer should have**

**I yearn for desires  
A sometime lover should feel**

**To the teak wood door  
With shiny brass hinges  
I ring the bell for you  
Waiting somewhere inside**

**Will you be in a satin robe  
Draped upon a velveteen chaise  
Or in the kitchen  
A ringlet of hair fallen out of place in the steam**

**What will you expect of me  
In the way of performance  
I think you don't really care all that much  
The idea of a man visiting will work the magic**

**Visiting you alone in your loneliness  
Don't answer the ring**

**Let me wander the vast house  
To find your beating heart and rapid breaths**

**Victor Valmore 06/15/2004**

## Flying Chocolate

Anger accompanied me to the market  
Where I fed the beast with the idea  
Of a single chocolate egg creme  
From the aisle where the overweight  
And overwrought commit their worst crimes

Having enough of the crowded store  
I head for the checkout to pay my fine  
And meet that decision point of which line  
Provides the quickest exit  
From the anxiety now at fever pitch

I choose first the woman counting pennies  
Not from heaven but a hell deep inside me  
So to the next cash register where bawling baby  
And sulky assistant manager  
Throw annoyed glances at mother pushing the cart

Are there no sane people afoot in this place  
I spy an open spot several lanes to the left  
Sprint with my chocolate softening inside the foil  
Just in time to have the plastic tab shoved in my face  
Sorry closed please go to another line

I was angry when I entered I am angrier now  
This is not subject to negotiation or management  
Like lava seeking its outlet beneath earth's crust  
The only remedy is to pour forth the venom  
Let everyone know how out of control I am

Here's your fucking chocolate flying flying  
To the plate glass window behind the matrons  
Waiting for hubby to bring the car round  
It hits with a thud and plops to the floor  
All gooey and wet I storm out the door

Victor Valmore 06/17/2004

## Deer Babies

Walking along the shady side  
Of a familiar pasture  
Taking a short cut to avoid being late  
I notice several baby deer  
Scattered along the grassy path

Some are looking at me with concern  
Most are sound asleep  
They seem to be both newborns  
Carelessly covered in slimy placentas  
And some curiously quiet adolescents

It is not a problem but a joy  
To wander among these forest babies  
Until they become so thickly settled  
I fear I will step on one or another  
Maintaining a precarious balance

These are not healthy specimens  
Rotting innards spilling onto green verge  
All messed up in an atomic accident  
That I have just now realized  
Has probably taken their parents in the hills

Why have they collected here  
Perhaps to die together  
As they were taught to frolic  
With one another and now know no better  
Than to mass in death

Victor Valmore 06/19/2004

## Throw Some Glitter

What is it about glam-glitter  
That makes us all wake up and take notice  
An otherwise normal person  
Or should we say any passable person  
Radiates enviable accoutrements  
Like a stick figure woman on a catwalk  
Becoming something else altogether  
No longer in the altogether world  
Of naked nothingness

Throw some glitter at a parade of strangers  
Imagine them wearing little particles home  
To a partner who loudly admonishes  
Secretly admires the chutzpah  
Takes ownership in the boldness of life  
Which otherwise would remain in a dull realm  
Daring only to dream of exotic fruit  
Forever out of reach unattainable as that outfit  
Of luminescent green silk in a glossy magazine

Transcend those pleas to accessorize accessorize  
With the light of promise beyond the duties  
In the office where your boss will say  
What the hell is that in your teeth  
She's too cowed by the boldness to expect an answer  
Satisfied instead to be a part of the sophistication  
By dint of just noticing the sparkle  
Repeated in your curls or perhaps a stray comet  
Trailing lightly at the back of a hem

Victor Valmore 06/30/2004

## Ramada Rocks

**It was a nightmare of a dream  
Staying at a Ramada Inn first floor room  
Overlooking a grassy backyard  
In the middle of Singapore**

**Up in the higher floors  
Accessed through sticky gummy elevators  
Were the dealers who provided us  
With rocks broken into shards and powder**

**We seemed to have more than enough stems  
To go around  
And melted the crumbs nicely  
With plastic cigarette lighters**

**The thrill of watching white particles  
Liquidize and seep into the copper mesh  
The excitement at the moment of ignition  
Drove nostalgia to its breaking point**

**We could have sex all night  
In the steamy heat of the close room  
Tie up our genitals into excited nosegays  
And run porn flicks non-stop on the borrowed VCR**

**The knowledge that I would do it in a minute  
Was hardly assuaged by the self-imposed promise  
To consider the sobering light of the next day  
I would do it if it was real**

**And take the consequences just to have it  
One more time like in the dream  
It wasn't a real dream I was semi-conscious  
Knowing I would do it again**

**Victor Valmore 07/03/2004**

## Face Paintings

Last night I painted the faces of my two sons  
In an iconic language that spoke to them  
And to others in quiet prescribed tones  
Based on the use of powdered yellow sometimes  
Mixed with waxy stripes of blue and black

The runic symbolism was not mysterious  
Only very difficult to understand and to obtain  
Just the right mix of colors shapes and textures  
Interestingly there is no self-consciousness  
Involved with the touching and rubbing of the pastes  
Nor any objection to the layering of the colors  
Only respectful patience awaiting the outcome

Do we need a mirror to test the effectiveness  
No only the reflections in our trusting faces  
Tell the tales of wizards and their followers outwitting  
Self-deluded megalomaniacs who are no match  
For the cleverness of father-son secret protected codes

Victor Valmore 07/05/2004

## **Am I Ever Going Home?**

**Do the powers that be know  
I am scheduled to rotate out in two weeks  
The question always being am I going home  
Or am I just getting out of here saving my life**

**Up on the hill in the abandoned housing projects  
There are soldiers hiding in the bushes  
A sharpshooter could get a bead on one  
And pop him unawares at the risk of stirring up a hornets' nest**

**Why rock the boat when you are so short  
Let's just sit back and chill out for the evening  
I'll play some tunes on my horn while rifles are being cleaned  
And cohorts are trying not to look my way with envy**

**The same old song plays over and over in my head  
Something happened and I never really came back  
I'm stuck in this time warp neo-reality third dimension thingee  
My clever brain carries on non-existent salvage operations**

**A new life clean and clear of the never ending hyper terror  
Circuits so impossibly overloaded you don't realize  
You are in the same combat hole for all eternity  
Your new reality the latest existential best-seller**

**How can I be so wrong  
I pinch my flesh and feel it pinkening  
Sleep my sleep and feel it dreaming  
Make my plans and see them failing**

**Victor Valmore 07/14/2004**

## Kind of a Gas Station

What kind of a gas station is this  
Where Gigantic US coins are cut out  
In the shapes of the bald eagle and Miss Liberty  
Presidents and other icons of America  
Then the metal pieces are put into a box  
From which you must choose a piece  
As your passport to the gas pumps

I have a few of the ungainly cut-outs  
And wonder if this is a reflection of the confusion  
Of things foreign or a universal bureaucratic  
Interpretation of Kafkaesque proportions  
Where the only solution is to bend to the rules  
Follow instructions to the letter  
And hope that you will be able to get gassed up

With a full tank and a full heart I wait patiently on line  
To pay the bill that can only be generated  
By the coin segment and a personal review  
With the manager at the checkout booth  
Why am I always the last to figure things out  
Why do I always seem to wait longer than anyone else  
To get from here to there

Victor Valmore 07/24/2004

## Take Me Out to the Ballgame

In the big stadium with little brother Chuck  
To learn all about the game of baseball  
I lose interest early on and acquire a thirst  
That can only be satisfied with a nice tall cool one

Looking through the hordes lined up for beer  
I encounter a laughing troop of townies  
And realize with certain dismay  
I hear some unkind words like queer and gay

The universal sign I have seen the quickest queens  
Toss back like a hot coal or a warm turd  
Pat on the butt firm to the touch  
Hand to the lips the kiss blown nicely with a wave

It floats through the air on a cloud of bravado  
Followed by a sashay okay and a wiggle of the hips  
The crowd has been cowed nothing to say  
To fight with the same weapons would never do

A little bit of a grumble from the dim-witted ones  
The majority opinion is they have been finessed  
In another time or another day  
It would have been nice job faggott now go away

This time around a pat on the back  
Tip of the plastic cups spilling lite beer  
A cheer from the stands a clear indication  
That more important things are at hand

Victor Valmore 07/25/2004

## Kiss

It was a real surprise for me to see  
That you were interested in more than my mind  
The idea that flashed through both of us at the same time  
Was a nice thing to have happen to our burgeoning friendship

What was particularly interesting to me  
Was the new-found idea based on my earlier theory  
Sex is nothing more than a spiritual communication device  
Man-made for the purpose of finding a piece of God in another

There was no need to try and explain  
Your supplicating eyes told me all I needed to know  
I looked down long lonely roads into goldened temples  
And once again visited sweet incense and hushed adoration

Why does this feel so right to me now  
In the autumn of my years and the dead of night  
Because I have religiously lived this life as proselytized  
Unashamed uninhibited unrepentant and as of late unresolved

Thanks for the visit and the kiss  
That was and is the moment most anticipated  
All of the rest can either be great or merely tolerated  
That first warm brush of lips upon lips was always my favorite

Victor Valmore 07/27/2004

## A Christmas Parlor

Family Christmas parties are different things  
For different people  
So many of us coming from so many places  
For so many reasons  
I for instance worry about getting there in the snow  
And being properly dressed for show  
See the little flags marking the way  
And shoe cloths for buffing old leather brogues

Expect a big crowd with the usual impossibility  
Of gaining attention during the opening of gifts  
I see my name on a package  
That smacks of some kind of health food  
Oh well what to expect from well-meaning  
Unimaginative gift givers maybe I can manage  
Not to appear too smarmy in the midst of my appreciation  
A good puppy accepting overworked bones

The ribbon-candy balsam fir smell of the tree  
And low lights surrounding a crèche softened  
With last summer's golden hay pulled from the loft of a barn  
Conspire to bring back those holidays that had no end  
The ones without reminders of the guys overseas  
No passing of the tape cassette for a message to be sent  
APO with the fruitcake in the tin cookies tied with red bows  
A sigh and a wink and too much to drink

Victor Valmore 08/01/2004

**Lion King**

**It is going to be an outdoor performance  
And in spite of my terror to be onstage  
All eyes and ears focused on my every word  
This won't be so bad because of the  
COSTUMES**

**Rich pelts of fur on hinged wooden limbs  
Dozens of seamstresses tailors and dressers  
Swarming the verge with pincushions  
Threaded needles wielded like auto mechanics  
At the Indy 500**

**I'm curiously if not dangerously nonchalant  
About my lines thinking if all else fails  
I can pull some strings prod a stick or two  
Flail about like the fool that I am for getting  
Myself into this mess**

**The proscenium is the falsehood of all falsehoods  
Held up in the back by flying buttresses  
That look like they will fail at the first sign of a stiff breeze  
Adding to the temporal tinge of the performance  
It makes me giddy with delight**

**At the sheer bravado of the thing  
Now and then a prompter walks by with open book  
Asking for the next line a response of some sort  
At least an acknowledgement that vocals are expected  
I am happy just to pull some strings**

**Watch the arms flap the legs kick  
It takes two to tango with the banjo on my knee  
I am having the time of my life learning the ropes  
So to speak don't bother me with details  
Like the lines the Lion speaks**

**Victor Valmore 08/02/2004**

**Japonniere**

**Japan was in the air  
Little ceramic single-cup tea pots  
Detachable milk cruets  
To make them more European**

**My friend Carol was shopping for Mom  
Proudly hefting a little tray of shiny baubles  
Too unsubtle for this kind of fare  
Look to the shelf of earthenware instead**

**Down in the arcade where you can grab a bite  
Boiling kettles of miso noodles  
Special lines for the special events  
A fund-raiser of sorts to help I don't know who**

**Some of the food is priced  
At the level of small boats or automobiles  
Such is the esteem placed on the dishes  
I think as much for the tastefulness as the taste**

**To say the air was rarified  
Would be too unsubtle as well  
There are socialites who wouldn't be caught dead  
Down in the shop trenches with us**

**But we're happy just to be  
Sophisticated and educated and full of culture  
The hand-made objets d'art getting us there  
Faster than years of eating raw dead fish at steel counters**

**Victor Valmore 08/05/2004**

## Frosty Chuckles

A walk in a snowy forest  
When the temperature is body level  
In sneakers that stay on top of the crust  
And sweet honeydew parked on your upper lip  
Glistens like diamond chips in a high school friendship ring

It is late spring when robins are playful  
One of them darts in an upward spiral of laughter  
As I pass stealthily away while pretending to steal  
His worm from the little tuft of wet leaves peeking at me  
Below the snowline on a well-trod path through lacy hemlocks

I feel so light and carefree  
I run and jump like a twelve year-old  
Before learning why boys shouldn't frolic  
Through the snowy woods in water-logged shoes  
Shouldn't be so happy just to soak up some sun on the run

Where am I going with this dream  
Why has it visited me now in my misery and pain  
Can it be a reminder that not all is lost not all is in vain  
There are ample opportunities for feeling nature's love again  
Ample opportunities to have the sun on my face and in my heart

Victor Valmore 08/17/2004

## Red Banquettes

Plush tufted red velvet carriages  
Await me in the circular drive  
They are here to carry me to my funeral  
As I feel myself greatly weakened and frail  
I'm dying of AIDS it is in the final few days  
I have agreed to see a priest one Father L'Africain  
Only because it will aid the finality  
Of my life here on earth  
Only because it is expected  
By those few who have gathered to see me off

Ecstasy oh ecstasy take me away  
I can hardly wait for that final moment  
Will it be like I dreamed in my dream  
The one I always try to recover  
The one that ends the world's unrelenting effort  
There is comfort we cannot know  
Only guess at the warmth coursing through  
Veins battered blue by too many thoughtless slights  
The ones that play over and over across blisters  
Scabs and finally scars

I carry the memory of this dream  
Into the day like a wave that has kissed the sand  
And rolled back into the calm surf  
Knowing full well there will be another one  
To follow when the tides change again  
Another lover to ride across the horizon  
Spot me on the beach  
Glide into my life for the time it takes  
To forget how little we care for the solemn end  
That will carry us to the red plush carriages

Victor Valmore 08/28/2004

**Miss Nancy T**

**I dreamt of your new digs taking shape  
Near fancy brick walls erected by the gas company  
To hide the functionality that interferes with form  
An important consideration for anyone like you  
With your let-me-be-the-hostess mind**

**The white galleries yet sterile and mostly unadorned  
Have been constructed with minimalist care  
That gives umbrage to those who can never embrace  
Your need to reflect the purity of space  
The rightness of each studied placement**

**There are oil paintings scattered about  
Like little memories collected in your life portfolios  
Belonging to the early blue period perhaps  
When as a child you did not yet meet the expectations  
Of a world so big so big so big**

**A portrait of you with pre-teen doo-wop bangs  
Thick layers of rough textured oils in faded sepia tones  
Has given verisimilitude where it is unnecessary  
Because your impish twinkle cannot be buried  
In some bold attempt at haute conceptual retro sub-genre**

**Put you in a boring shredded burlap sack wrap  
With Gold Medal medallions from a cigar box  
Found in the back of Paige's store  
What more do you need to show us all that style  
Is so far embedded it shines into the fabric of your life**

**Lucky are we the ones who visit your galleries  
In our dreams  
Lucky are we the ones who taste the flavors  
From your kitchen  
Lucky are we the ones allowed to love you**

**Victor Valmore 09/04/2004**

**Dedicated to my dear friend Nancy Thomas who will always invade my  
dreams**

**Scream (Not Howl)**

**Sometimes I hear a man's voice screaming  
Somewhere in the building  
Sometimes he is pleading make it stop it hurts so much  
This voice echoes in hallways I never see  
Yet I know they are there because the echoes somehow find me**

**Going about the business at hand  
Today conducting classes with big paper flip charts  
I hear that voice again and look about to see  
If anyone else will comment on the terror echoing all around  
Apparently not I can't wait to escape this screaming**

**What is the nature of the torture  
Spawning such heart-rending passionate pleas  
Perhaps we are dealing with a medical malfunction  
A brain-eating earwig enters my head  
With the chilling idea the voice belongs to me**

**How can this be that I really hear it in the hall  
Make it stop oh make it stop it hurts so much  
There it is again  
You can't tell me I have so little control over my own senses  
I can't discern an echo in the hall from a stab in my heart**

**Victor Valmore 09/04/2004**

## Starfuck Lattes

We are trading info about unique experiences around town  
 I am alone giving advice to fawning upwardly mobile couples  
 This restaurant is a must that rock pool in the glen a find  
 There is only such on the agenda find your last day on earth

What about those women who have children out of wedlock  
 Unashamed and unabashed they cuddle little bundles  
 Of joy they are not immune to caring they are well prepared  
 Having given themselves already on the holy altar of love

This is not just shopping in the mall having a ball at the market  
 There are no bundles without the price no experience too dear  
 In my heart I beg not to be left out in the lonely hoary forest  
 Let me help you find that smidgen of meaning in running shoes

I adore the swoosh and the smoosh and the starfuck latte  
 How can we put all of this into an edible cone  
 Scrape enough from the sidewalk to fill plastic warriors  
 With the emblems of our lives the true meaning of our existence

Follow me into town around the square I will show you there  
 Are better things than you can find in your feeble mind  
 Dvd vcr cdc msg fda rfq msrp all you can eat just heat it up  
 Serve it to me with an open zipper directly into my brain

Scoop it shoot it slice it dice it move it with your lacrosse stick  
 Nothing does it better than neutron microwave soul busters  
 This is really good for the cold and flu seasons too  
 No need to worry about ill effects whafuck we're talking about  
 dying anyway

Victor Valmore 09/17/2004

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Victor Valmore 09/17/2004

## Hong Kong Apartment

I always imagined an apartment in Hong Kong  
On the island with uncharacteristic calmness  
In the waters of the straits separating us from the mainland  
An apartment high up in the building  
On a floor with a number old enough to collect social security  
And acres and acres of pastel colored polished marble  
In the halls the foyer the vast living room  
Plate glass windows framing the sails of bobbing junks  
Hydrofoils heading for Macao  
Container ships laden with the treasures of the East  
Passenger jets trimming the tops of housing estates  
Close enough to see family diners clacking chopsticks  
Beyond laundry drying on cement balconies  
Touched by silver wingtips on their way in and out

My building is overseen by a gnarly Chinese gentleman  
Dressed in British yeoman's livery  
He knows me and my Israeli friend Eyal Rimmon  
That hale fellow who never ages and always has a mission  
Though no urgency to identify with any particular endeavor  
Always on like a nightlite guarding a dark staircase  
There is no objection when the suggestion is made  
That we swim the channel for an adventure on Nathan Road  
Let's go see the tourists and the millions of milling workers  
Hustling their lives away among the cement canyons  
A quick swim dodging the boats alighting at the ferry terminal  
Dinner in a five star hotel the Peninsula or the Regent perhaps  
Just remember if this wasn't a dream you would die  
From exposure to toxic chemicals churning in the harbor

Victor Valmore 09/25/2004

## En Vacances

On vacation in some undisclosed coastal locus  
All middle-aged men naked like me  
We climb the surrounding craggy rocks  
In search of the perfect secluded beach

All of us have surf boards or other equipment  
Tucked protectively under our arms  
Curiously we are not focused on penises  
But are truly un-self-conscious to other eyes

And more curiously we all wear the same espadrilles  
Covered in black turquoise and purple wire  
And baseball caps worn the way they are meant to be worn  
Protective visors shading our faces from sunny blame

Up the rock face over the crest a view unfolds  
Aquamarine pools beckon from afar  
More an ideal of the mind than actual places  
A quest by an army of like-mindedness

This is not a commentary on lack of originality  
It is the recognition of how well we have learned  
To like the same things or at least to bask in them  
Without having someone say how uncool you are

Victor Valmore 10/11/2004

## Winter Training

Good baseball players  
Practice twelve months a year  
During the winter months  
There are automatic pitchers  
Lobbing balls at my brother Chuck  
To be hit out into the frozen pastures

The sports complex  
Where we keep ourselves in shape  
For the coming season  
Has heavy bales of dried hay  
Hugging buildings with warm jackets  
They look like wartime sandbags

And where do I fit into this picture  
More interested in dining details  
Sleeping arrangements  
Logistics of running the camp  
Than in the honing of particular skills  
That will only be needed after the thaw

Victor Valmore 10/19/2004

## Drug Hospital

**This is a place where chromed wheelchairs  
Do Bette Midler pirouettes up and down the halls  
While dealers roam freely in green scrubs  
With pockets full of dream potions  
Everyone is on something  
I manage to keep my own little blue pills  
The ones with the smiley faces  
There is finally universal health care  
So no funds exchange hands  
No embarrassment at having to promise  
Payment tomorrow for removal of sorrow today  
Give me give me give me my oxycontinient  
A world of suffering shoved offshore  
It's a hell of a way to sail into the sunset**

**Victor Valmore 10/24/2004**

## Flight Training

We move our lunch into the exhaust flames  
Of the jet engines  
A Mongolian barbecue for the licking flames  
Awaiting flight qualification  
Me and Hillary Rodham Clinton herself  
Are going to practice take off and landing  
She wants to be able to do a Dubyah  
On the aircraft carrier I guess  
Me I just want to be able to fly when I feel like it  
Finally we're strapped in and ready  
The plane is flung through a tunnel  
Like a giant pea shooter to the stars  
Our admirable pilot assures us all the way  
I'll do everything you just relax and enjoy the ride  
There is a great thrill in the rapid descent  
Weightlessness is everything I expected  
Like the first time I had real sex  
Everyone okay so far  
Now we're going into the trickier maneuvers  
Landing gear down ready to drop  
I don't want this dream to stop

Victor Valmore 11/01/2004

## The Queen Mother Visits

When do our dreams stop giving us our daily dose  
Of hope and promise  
When do our eyes fail to read the silver mantle  
Worn by trees on the hill  
It happens when our memory is stilted by life  
Call it greed  
It also happens when the poison of hatred  
Fills in the well of desire  
Those little drops of purest salty liquid  
That roll onto your lashes and your woolen coat  
Spring not from the joyful bowels of years ago  
From the little child who actually liked the snow  
They are only the world's homeless memories  
Forced out onto the street by the unfriendly cold wind  
Of selfish indifference

Last night the queen mother was here  
For a solemn occasion a funeral I believe  
She attended the services with a female relative  
Her daughter perhaps or a distant cousin  
They were both borne on the single shoulders  
Of sturdy yeomen enlisted and trained for this very purpose  
Royalty so sure of their place  
Riding on the backs of others' pain and sorrow  
It has always been like this  
And will probably always be  
We can only carve out our own understanding  
And adopt our own arrogant place  
In the midst of the sorrow the pity that is not real  
And the little boy who never knew any of this  
The little one who visits so sporadically and so infrequently

Victor Valmore 11/05/2004

**Omar**

**In the old abandoned movie house  
Where they still play oldies but goodies  
For those of us who discriminate  
You are the king of the hill  
Undisputed master of all that is cool  
We rely on you to help us make sense  
Of the vacuous vacancies in our lives  
To bring a sense of event a cause to rouse  
Ourselves from stuporous somnolence  
In sober month after sober month  
The path is cleared by the scythe  
Of your wisdom a wisdom that pours  
From the corners of your mouth like  
Honey from little paper cells**

**Who else would know how to order  
A leg of lamb from the lady dispensing  
Hot buttered popcorn  
A frozen gam plunked down  
On the counter with the jujubes  
Chocolate coated old wooden cased marvel  
Of a showcase and you the king of all this  
Unwavering in your command of our tattered lives  
A self-assured model behind your fears  
In spite of your bulk you dance in thrall  
A ballerina of the truth to life we might have lost  
But for the appearance of your kindness  
In our pas de deux dada give me strength  
To make it through just one more day**

**Victor Valmore 02/21/2005**

**Cathedral Wedding**

**You wanted it to be better than Mom's I guess  
The wedding I mean had to be bigger  
So off to the immensity of the Middle Ages  
Even though you are Jewish**

**We congregate before the ceremony  
Awaiting the arrival of the bride and groom  
Among brocaded tapestries and velveteen kneelers  
The cavernous ceilings high as heaven imagined above**

**Your little spawn with the blond hair  
How did she get that you're both dark Semitic  
Has her little porta-potty behind the bishop's chair  
Proudly displays yellow piss sloshing in the plastic bowl**

**How to tell her about appropriateness  
There is none in this family  
The purpose of the wedding not to tie a knot  
But to tie a favorable impression on the attendees**

**Ah here comes the cleric a kindly sort of man  
Immune to the dismissiveness of his clients  
Knowing too that it is the pompous ceremony that matters  
Not the vows and the bows to God in heaven above**

**The lord works in strange ways and we need to pay the rent  
So what if the congregants are rowdy as a matinee performance  
These two obviously hate each other  
As well as the world around them**

**Why else do they smarm and whine  
But to prove to the assembly their true intent  
To better their elders in all that they can  
And do it with just the right measure of careless elan**

**Victor Valmore 05/07/05**

## Dark Brown Wainscoting

Dark brown wainscoting  
Built high up the wall  
Either the room is just immense  
Or I am not so tall still a small little boy

Honeyed with age the wall not me  
Familiar with stogied card games  
Canned goods stacked in the corners  
For the day the world will end

Once there was lemon oil  
Cloths too good for the rag man  
Who comes by on Tuesdays  
Unfortunate nag pulling his high-piled cart

Now the nicks and dents  
A smooth patina of a thousand meetings  
Belt buckles boot buckles bare knuckles  
Screams from all ages

Perfume out of an old drainage bottle  
Faint traces of collisions with lollipops  
Discarded ribbon candy  
And overstayed balsam Christmas trees

Dark brown wainscoting  
You wrap your beveled arms around me  
Like a coffin ready for the ground  
Somehow it's better than an old shirt

I like this visit to the old room  
Or maybe the old porch swept clean  
With a broom from the kitchen closet  
It smells of good days that never sin and never end

Victor Valmore 11/24/05

### Cocky Careless Jailer

We're all in this prison see  
 Captured Saracens or some other doomsters  
 I'm the one who had to piss you off  
 Jailer with issues from a battered childhood  
 Take your best shot at me

Wow we can't believe it when you enter the cell  
 Take a sledgehammer to the concrete ledge  
 Below the window the proof  
 That I am not to be trusted  
 Look what this whacko has done now punish him

The unfairness of it all wells from a place  
 Deep deep down sans windows doors or means of egress  
 I guess that's where the idea comes from  
 Can't stop my chains tight around your beefy neck  
 The bruising not enough I take the hammer to your head as well

Yeah there'll be hell to pay for sure  
 But so what anything's better than starving to death  
 In a stinking rotten lair next to the animal pens  
 Clacking claws on the rusty bars give me the idea  
 Your body thrown to the lions who can't wait

To chew on your limbs  
 An arm a leg flesh given up to savagely hungry beasts  
 All the evidence needed to get me off the hook  
 The devil jailer gone my place of exalted ruler  
 Cemented at once in the cold dungeon of our misery

No one would dare to give me up  
 That is if there was even any reason to doubt  
 Universal celebration for intestines festooned across the cage  
 Guts of cruelty too late to save the body  
 From now on I will starve in the greatest dignity

Cocky careless jailer got too close to the animal cage

Victor Valmore 12/04/05

### The Ladder

I was already up the top  
Waiting on you to haul some tools  
Or materials we were to use  
For a repair a patch a gutter cleaning

Watching you ascend my heart warmed  
To the memory of your savior nature  
Always the one to do the duty  
No matter the cost to you

The exchange was made with a quick move  
A loving shovel full of duty  
The ladder listing precariously  
From the extreme height of the enterprise

One of those moments of clarity  
I recalled Ma saying she was too tired to go on  
Just leave me and tell the others  
It's time for me to let go there's nothing you can do

No not the same this time I want to help I don't agree  
Desperately disbelieved that it could happen  
Impossibly long laterals bending between the rungs  
Such a climb should not have been attempted

But oh what dismissal resignation acceptance  
As the long wooden arms carried you outward  
Like some horrible uncooked spaghetti waving you away  
To wobble weakly just beyond my grasp

Then gravity took charge as we sort of knew it would  
Down down you were to go into a certain death  
No hope of redemption in youthful adventure this time  
Our eyes locked briefly from the wrong end of a telescope

My horror was to awaken  
Not knowing why you visited me thus  
You never blamed never could  
True brothers never do

Victor Valmore 10/26/06

## The Poem

I was meant to read a poem  
For a class  
To test my extemporaneous  
Skills

Ostensibly and sensibly a poem  
I had never seen  
To everyone's surprise  
I knew it by heart

I knew it in other languages  
The words said  
Without subtlety and ironically  
How the rain

The heavy pelting rain  
Washed away  
All of the badness and the evil  
Of our relationship

Oh the wind the heavy hurricane wind  
Broke the ragged edges  
Of our hatred and the awful things  
We did to each other

Finally the storm washed away the love  
That once lived there  
Landed sanded flotsam and jetsam  
Of a failed relationship

Victor Valmore 02/05/06

## A Quick Visit

Omar is clean and sober  
Getting ready to cook for the party  
We're both in it up in some treehouse office  
Where tables need cleaning and dishes need washing

Together we see in each other  
The potential for taking a drink and a walk  
Down that road with the "sophisticated" guests  
Where darkness holds court and tomorrow never intrudes

And Toddsky makes an appearance  
With you-know-who on the way back to SA  
Just a long enough stopover in the US to disseminate  
Ill-advised schemes and faulty rationalities of life without parole

Victor Valmore 03/23, 2007

## The Building

Some things in life you wonder if they are dreams  
Or just a reality morphed into memories that grow  
Until they are as big as the building I visited last night  
I was the tour guide for some friends who were visiting  
For the very first time and didn't know what to see

A structure so large we met vehicles roaming grassy knolls  
In the cloud cover and a rusting beacon of wire mesh  
On a towering toothpick of steel dangerously close to heaven  
This vertiginous place has the rats of Taipei  
The smog of Shanghai and the mold of Mumbai

In the waking twilight I am not sure if I have been here before  
I remember the distinct thrill of vertigo the distance  
To the ground so vast and the milling crowds  
In every crevasse and shopping center of the complex  
Buzzing buzzing buzzing and foreign as the country we're in

Victor Valmore 03/25/07

There are no more Sustiva Dreams as the medication has failed  
me and I have changed to a new cocktail  
I have lost a dear friend