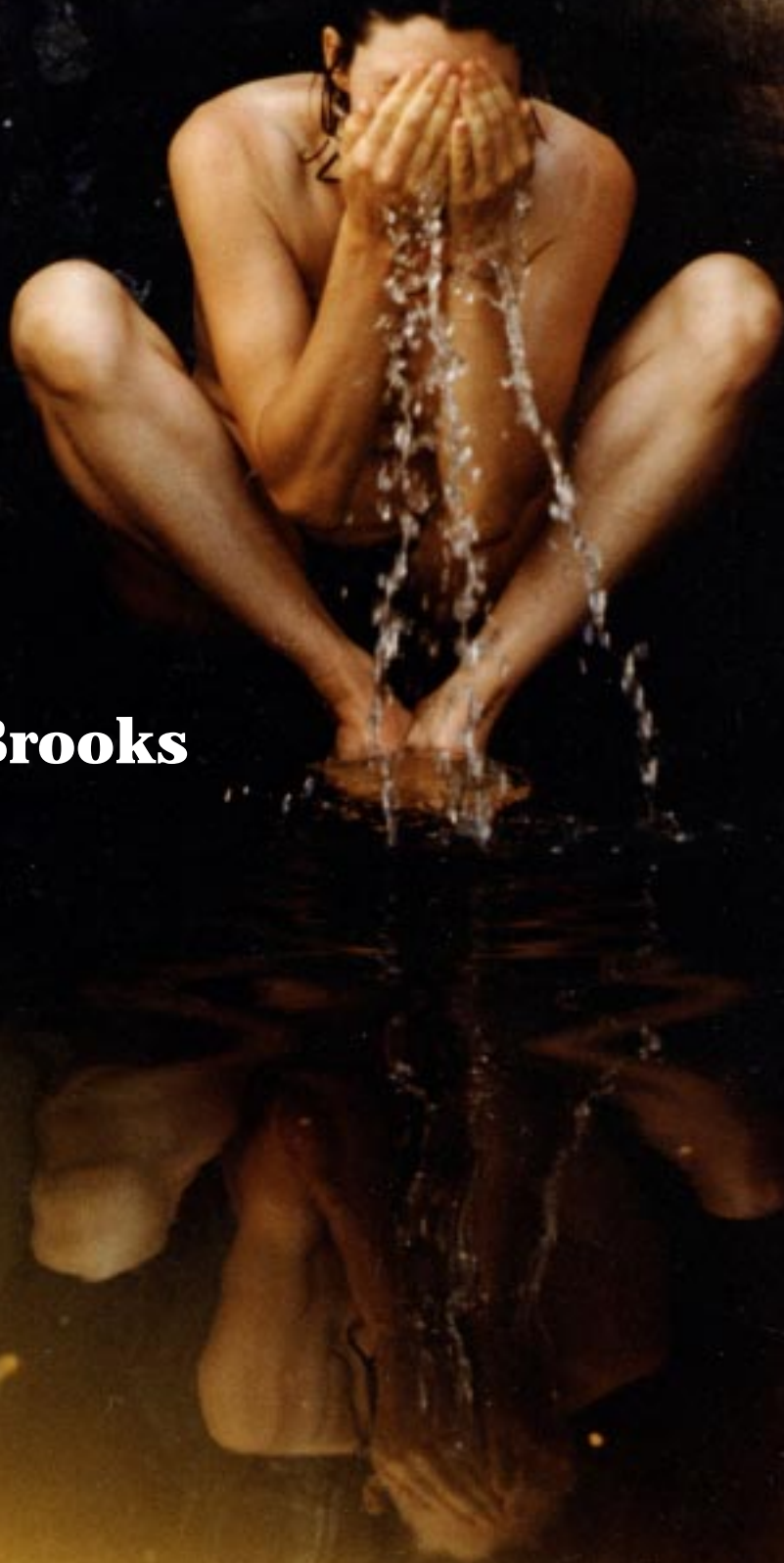


# Rain

by

**Jeff Brooks**





# **Rain**

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my early spiritual teachers  
Francis Grow and Roger Davis.





**May I benefit all beings with every action**

## **Introduction**

What has always fascinated me is the idea that, through the ceaseless action of something so insubstantial as water and wind, mountains are worn to sand and carried out to sea. My life seems like that, a constant abrasion of little things wearing me into nothing, but then I come from a place that is not known for its water or its wind. A place where water, due to its scarcity, is the most sacred of things.

My home, which is in the Sonora desert, is a dry place, and often still, so still that one can hear the blood pounding in one's ears. The night sky can be so black, and the starlight so brilliant, that a path can be illuminated on a moonless night.

The Sonora desert is known for its sun and its heat that can feel like a mallet against one's skin. Summer can be a seasonal flailing that few people would know if they have not felt the July sun bake through their skin to the bone.

One can emerge from a quiet canyon, after spending the day in refuge from the desert heat by laying near a pool of tea-colored water, fed by a trickle against rock, to the low growl of a 10 mile long freight train at the base of a 25 mile long alluvial fan.

This life has been a long journey from the refuge of canyons to tentative explorations of our culture, that quickly turned into a turbid flow of responsibilities, then a long untangling of the webs of commitment, before returning again to refuge in simple

riparian canyons.

I was born here between four mountains, between the union of two rivers. I rose up out of this almost-pink, hard-packed caliche. The Sonora desert is the center of my world, it is my holy land. I have traveled around the world, and I have lived in many places, but I keep coming back to these mountains and ragged canyons, these prickly plants and creatures for sustenance. They fill my internal landscape.

I have often observed that sacred moment of the sun rising, like an amber disk before peach breakers on a turquoise Caribbean sea, that hangs like a canopy over the belly of the nearby Rincon mountains, that the Tohono O'odham (our local indigenous people) call Pregnant Sleeping Woman or the Corn Mother, because those mountains look like a reclining pregnant woman. The end of the day is often punctuated in equal beauty as the sunset turns the jagged Tucson Mountain's blood red, like a gila monster's mouth.

My life has been a blending of contradictions where I studied ancient cultures and primitive healing practices, and learned to live in the wilderness off wild foods, then I worked in research labs where I searched for dark matter, measured the temporal stability of materials, and made measurements in environments that approached absolute zero and perfect vacuums.

This chapbook, "Rain," explores how rain, like relationships, we often take for granted, because of how abundant our lives are. When new-comers to this desert complain if the rain falls for a second day. I know they don't realize how sacred rain is here. Just as people, who have an abundance of love in their lives, because of the fractures in the fabric of our culture, complain about their lover.

The story I weave here is, like the watertight basket traditionally woven by our indigenous people, which is woven from cactus and thorns into a smooth, tight basket with renowned skill. This story is woven from the disparate threads of social commentary on the drug war, violence, child abuse, environmental atrocities to alchemy, physics and astronomy. I use cross cultural metaphors from various Native

American tribes, the pre-Christian Celtic tribes of Northern Europe, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern metaphors and various Asian mythologies.

I believe, what we do to each other in our interpersonal relationships reverberates throughout the culture and environment, even to the extent that unrelated events seem to serve to inform our daily lives, and discontentedness and resentment holds back the rain, just as love and affection brings it down in buckets.

Rain in this desert has a characteristic smell, that people talk about and will remember for the rest of their lives. The smell of our rain comes from the greasewood bush, also known as creosote or chaparral. It is a yellow-green bush that grows throughout the Sonora desert, and other places in the southwestern United States, and northern Mexico. The greasewood plant releases its essential oils just prior to a rain event. Greasewood is also used as a common herbal remedy. It is often used topically and internally primarily for its detoxification and antibiotic properties. I have heard many claims of its effectiveness in the treatment of various cancers and AIDS.

I learned of the medical properties of greasewood from another native Tucsonan, Roger Davis. He was a shaman I studied with in my early 20s. He prescribed herbal concoctions, read people's astrology charts (an art he learned from his mother,) and he communicated with disembodied spirits. We shared an intense relationship with our dreams. Dreams for us weren't just occasional foggy apparitions but a brilliantly lit world in which we traversed time, space and innumerable non-physical domains.

My facility with dreams came from my childhood. As a child, I dreamt so intensely and so frequently of swimming under water, that I was convinced I had learned how to swim underwater without the need of breathing. When I came to my adolescence, my dreams became even more intense, some of which were frightening. I told a few psychologists about them, and they decided I needed therapy. While I was sure I could make use of therapy, I believed that we had very different ideas of what constituted treatment or symptoms.

When I was six, a tall, dark malevolence haunted my dreams, so I slept in a spare bed in my mother's bedroom. My mother rented out my bedroom to an old woman, Francis Grow, who had ridden her bicycle to Tucson from Boston after the war. She was six foot tall, and she wore a long gray braid down the middle of her back. I imagined she was an Indian, but I never asked, and she never mentioned it. She had been a virgin all her life, and she was deeply spiritual, and health conscious. She became a great radiance to dispel that dark malevolence in my young life. So, when I was having trouble with my dreams I talked to her about them. She said, "Oh dear, you are having out-of-body experiences." She gave me a series of lessons from a Coptic mystery school, and said, "Read these they will help you."

The lessons consisted of lectures on the principles of out-of-the-body experiences and lead me through a series of exercises. In a few months I had gained facility with movement outside of my body. A year later I met Roger and we struck up a long friendship based on exchanging information that we acquired through our journeys out-of-the-body. We also shared a mutual interest in ethnomedicine and spiritual healing practices.

This body of poetry comes from the influence of this desert on my internal landscape and from my 30 years of out-of-the-body experiences, spiritual healing and practice of primitive medicine. I hope that you are touched and inspired by this work.



**the Family of Sun, Earth,  
Water and Air**

The rippling skirts  
of the mother ocean  
lie just beyond  
the horizon, where her hem  
blossoms and curls  
against the sand.

Her husband's heat  
lifts her hem  
onto the shoulders  
of her son

who stretches her skirts  
out across the land,  
where she rains  
down her love for all beings.

## **Mesa Land**

Chaco Canyon, Poetry of Homage for Joy Harjo

Mesas like tall ships jut  
From this undulating plain  
To touch the white feathers  
And hishi of the sky's sacred  
turquoise robe.

Salmon dawns and dusks rain  
Down on white capped mountains  
Sending deer and antelope  
To dance over shoals of silver-gray sage.

Great cloud-mountains drift  
Like icebergs dragging  
Nets of rain  
Past island-mesas.

Rose colored stone cut  
Like cake, stacked in cords,  
And scuttled  
On the reefs of time,  
Sink into red dust.

A blood red road snakes  
Through the cresting waves  
Of a yellow-green sea of grass.  
A scar gouged into a soft cheek.



## **Burying the Shaman**

In memory of Roger

A few puffs of down  
floated across a lapis sea  
sky washed clean by three days  
of southern spring rain.

Paradise lay at the feet  
of Silver Peak gleaming  
with late snow.

A Cathedral of jagged red cliffs  
erupt from this fallen valley  
of Cave Creek. Where  
a river of life flows  
with sacred sycamores

shining silver in the bright  
warm sun, filtered through  
a malachite blanket of new  
leafed cottonwoods.

The Shaman's twelve apostles  
bore his ash through cedar  
and juniper medicine-  
scented trails to his rocky  
pool below jutting alters  
where I rang the bell,

and chanted the spell  
for a blessing  
attended by whirling  
starlings, and anointed  
by sudden rain.

## **a Toad Hunter's Night in the Tortalitas**

Cicadas call the rain  
with their incessant chatter.  
Monsoons build mountains  
on the flashing horizon.  
Wind tears at trees,  
Lightning leaps to Earth,  
rain screams, and thick water  
foams down empty washes

waking the toads from their dreams.

Jacks race my lights,  
leading me to them.

Avoiding amber tarantulas,  
transparent scorpions  
and night hunting rattlers,  
I find them sitting in the bright  
moonlight like malachite stones  
leaning into the creosote scented wind,  
chanting.

I hunt them for their medicine,  
which they carry in sacks  
like flabby armor.

Bats dart through the cool  
night breeze over blackened  
ponds with rain driven  
concentric waves shattering  
lightning reflections.

Coyotes laugh and giggle nearby  
while I gently milk the toads.

I was born here,  
between these four mountains,  
between these two rivers.  
I rose up out of this earth.  
This is the center of my world,  
my holy land.

**Rain.**  
**Man Dreaming Eagle, Dreaming Salmon,**  
**Dreaming Woman**  
before dams and canneries

Released from the prison of density  
I embraced the freedom of wind.  
Arching my body in tight turns  
Around cumulous mountains,  
I flew through streaking cirrus,  
And circled crystalline showers  
Of water and ice.

Called back to my cell  
I drifted down to the rolling ocean,  
And dove into a joyful harbor  
Where men and women danced.

My rainbow came to rest  
On shining Salmon Woman  
As she was scooped into a hoop net.

She is Sea Buffalo.  
Born in the trickle  
Of high mountain creeks,  
To graze in liquid meadows,  
She was carried out to sea.

Along warm ocean currents  
She swam for years.

In the rivers  
Spirit of Rain roars  
Through thundering falls  
Calling her back  
To the laughing waters  
To spawn only once.

## **Loving Spider Woman**

Like desert rain  
she comes rarely,  
and most often  
to another mountain  
where I see her draw  
her curtains, and dance  
on his hill.

I catch her scent  
drifting down an arroyo,  
a desert rain musk  
of creosote, dust and mud.

I hiked a narrow  
trail up a steep  
canyon wall,  
switchbacking  
endlessly, to dance  
with her.

But, her lightning  
pranced along the other  
ridge as her thunder  
beat against my chest.

I wanted her fat  
drops to pound  
on my mountain  
eroding me into thick  
mud like chocolate  
churning down washes.

I wanted her to leave  
me buried in an alluvial fan  
beneath saguaro and agave,  
but she smiled at me  
as she danced with another.



## **Monsoon Madness**

The summer sun strikes  
against the anvil  
of Tucson, and melts  
it into a delta of hot tar.

Cicada's frenzied chatter  
meets the afternoon heat  
as it builds to a delayed  
climax.

Heat-tension produces  
a black goo that becomes  
justifiable homicide.

A man swerves madly  
to avoid slow traffic.

Space and Earth meet  
at a rising black wall.

A girl bounces her  
truck over the curb  
to eject her boy-  
friend.

He throws a rock  
that bounces off her hub-  
cap with a ting.

She squeals her tires  
leaving a black snake  
writhing on soft tar.

Distant thunder rumbles.  
Sirens wail.  
Wind blows garbage  
cans and picnic tables  
across the road.

A yellow dust cloud  
forms in front of blackness.  
The smell of grease-  
wood is the only thing  
maintaining sanity.

Then a flash of light  
cracks open the universe,  
and blessed rain beats  
against the pavement  
producing a blinding  
flood that turns to golf ball-  
hail pounding  
against the windshield.

The street fills curb  
to curb and dumpsters  
sail majestically by.

We breath a sigh,  
and take off our shoes  
to wade in brown water.

Such is life where rain  
is an anticipated  
annual event.

### **a Detour on the Road to Troy**

Warm tropical winds blew,  
in the Spring, when I was young.  
I longed for my beloved,  
and set out for Little Rock

to find that beauty,  
that goat herder  
with thick black curls,  
a tiny waist and a body  
speckled with freckles.

That Alabama accent  
that melted my mind  
into corn mush.

When the paint brushes  
bloomed, my truck broke  
down in Dallas, and  
I landed in the dark eyes  
of a woman who mistook me  
for a prophet.

I mistook her for my beloved,  
and standing ankle deep  
in the mud of confusion  
we made love in the rain.



Lightning branched  
into tongues of fire while  
I held her round ass  
in my palms, and her thighs  
embraced my waist.

Black snakes writhed  
over her young breasts,  
and the rain ran into rivers  
down her tiny brown body.

We made love  
like we were lions  
and the other was prey.

At the dusk of sleep  
I slipped inside her skin,  
and felt the quiver  
of young breasts  
drunk by a gypsy's lips.

I longed for my beloved,  
when warm tropical winds blew,  
and the paint brushes bloomed.

## **Contours of My Heart**

You are beautiful, beautiful.

My eyes and hands have  
caressed the landscape  
of your body, and found  
the contours of my heart.

Your Irish white, white skin  
slipped beneath my peasant's paws  
between yellow mustard oil, scented  
with juniper berry and ginger.

What part of that great  
white rolling landscape  
with a sealkie's black, black hair  
could I not love?

But, of all that breath  
taking scenery, it was  
the graceful curving  
horizon of your lips,  
that my eyes  
could not leave.

And, when I dream  
we are two rainbows  
entwining like snakes,  
and springs rise in the desert.

I know that I am much older  
than you, and I would have only  
appreciated your beauty  
if I knew that you were so much younger.

But, Spider Woman played  
a silly game in her web  
of illusion, when she made  
me look younger  
than I am and you older.

I know that the body  
can know things  
that the mind cannot accept,

and when the mind resists  
the body, it becomes a headache  
that will not go away.

Please forgive my touch.  
Sometimes my body forgets  
that we are not lovers.

It is our Taurus moons  
that orbit each other  
with the magnetic pull  
of the touch  
we have been longing for  
all of our lives.

## **A Circle of Inflicted Wounds**

We dropped her dog  
at the vet  
for a castration  
while we lounged  
by a pool in a canyon  
massaging each other  
beneath flickering  
cottonwoods sounding  
like rain in the dry wind.

A week later I took  
her to my secret spot  
along the cold Gila  
river, camping with the dog.

Still licking his wounds  
of betrayal he jumped  
on her in the water,  
and inflicted a similar injury.

Romantic dreams of lying  
together under the bright  
solstice full moon sky  
were replaced by hours

in a one-doctor reservation  
emergency-room, where the nurses  
compared tattoos and told jokes  
over the curtain, while the doctor  
stitched her pubis.

On the way back  
she talked about ex-lovers,  
and future possibilities.  
I found myself missing  
from the list.

I realized I don't need  
no roller coaster  
romance or Mary-go-round  
love. I need a steady lady.

I don't need no  
"I think I love you,  
maybe I don't."

At home her ex-lesbian lover  
doted on her while I cut up  
a cold, wet watermelon.

I took her to a movie,  
and her lover joined us,  
and sat on her other side.

My car was on EMPTY,  
but I spent my last buck  
on her lover's ticket.

I see her seeking love  
where it isn't offered,  
or where it doesn't come  
without hooks and glue.

Finding being with her  
a one-way street,  
I think of my mother,  
and give up on filibustering  
for love. I choose to walk  
down yet another avenue.

## **Apollo and Daphne**

I dreamt I had become the sun,  
and you were a wild iris,  
that rose out of the soil  
awakened by early spring rain  
and my warm, bright days.

A tall stalk, pale and slender  
with a gentle nod and a ripple  
of silk the color of dawn.  
You waved in the breeze like smoke.

Holding a single blade  
you wilted easily before my heat.  
I wanted to pile  
moist black earth  
against your fleshy bulb.

But, you would have none  
of that, as you put out  
yet another flourish.

So, I became the ocean,  
and you were kelp with  
long ribbons streaming  
like Pele's golden hair

below churning surf  
with buoyant bladders  
streaming bubbles that  
danced in my amber light.

You let go and washed  
ashore to become a cloud,  
so I became the wind.

I shaped and molded  
you into many faces.  
I pulled and remade  
you, time and again.

I pushed you against mountains,  
and you became black  
and fell gorging dry washes.

But, I couldn't let you go,  
so I became the dark Earth,  
and you a river winding  
through my broad valley.

I contained you, but  
you eroded my banks,  
and churned me into  
a thick, brown slurry  
that you left in crescents,

where you became a tree  
rooted deep into me,  
and wild irises bloomed  
in my black, black mud.

## **Rotations of Rosaries**

In memory of Arjan

The day Arjan fell from the sky  
into Box Canyon I dreamt  
I flew soaring loops  
around the Bay Area  
using my will for a rudder.

After his memorial  
in a field of desert poppies  
I fed you soup, and made love  
to you like a pilgrim on Shiva  
Ratry, then fell asleep,

and dreamt your thigh  
had become a field fallow  
with yellow wild  
flowers, and five white  
rabbits with pointed  
ears nibbled.

It was your back  
that became a river  
with fat trout swimming lazy  
under flat rocks.



Your hip was a harrow's  
disc turning over black  
soil, and I wore your dark  
mud, a mantle upon my altar.

Outside rain fell like the flood,  
and I found I could regulate  
it from my dreams.

I awoke to find your body  
wore the gold of dawn  
gracefully as silk.

Reaching for metal  
my tongue counted  
the rosary of your skin,

and I cleansed myself  
in the pool of your belly  
that rose like tide  
on ancient worlds.

## **The Bull and Raven Dancing**

She was dry like cracked  
wheat and a raven's wing.  
She was sinew and sand,  
roots and tarot.

He was hot water and bile,  
sweat and sweet potatoes.  
He was tongue and fingers,  
lace and liver.

They were wet clay.

The knotted toll-rope slipped  
through his fingers  
like wet sinew,  
when the bell rang loud.

She was wracked  
with resonant spasms  
by the touch of Taurus,  
and rang like a bell  
that had waited decades  
for the toll.

Her fingers fluttered like  
wing-tip feathers on a black,  
black night.

His round back heaved  
as he bellowed.

He was mud under her fingernails,  
and she was a spider's web.

They danced improvisations  
of feathers and hide until 2 AM,  
when the bull and the raven  
met on a moonless night.

## **A Flash Flood Come to Rest**

On a moonless night  
I took my goddess to a dry  
canyon where coatimundi  
fractured into a dozen  
innocent eyes and danced  
like water flowing up hill.

We lay our blanket,  
mid-wash, on dry  
sand, for love-making  
under black cottonwoods,  
beneath a dark  
sky, glistening  
with stars.

Summer monsoons flashed  
in the mountains and echoed  
rippling over our bodies  
and down canyon walls.

In post orgasmic silence  
we heard him coming  
in the rustling of wind  
through unmoving trees,

that turned into stampeding  
of invisible deer, and became  
brown foam twisting  
over dry boulders as  
he danced into a blackened  
pool wearing stars on her skin.

They surged and swayed  
against the sand.

**The River Styx**  
in memory of Derrick

The day Derrick died  
Monsoons built clouds  
that dwarfed our 10 thousand  
foot mountains, and my finger  
tips touched a woman's in the exchange  
of money and a smile.

I saw a ring on her finger,  
and tried to make nothing  
of it, but wondered  
how it is that we bind ourselves  
to one person who later will  
have us thrown in jail?

White mountains spread out into gray ranges.  
The power company turned off my house.  
Afternoon turned black,  
and rain fell turning streets into rivers.  
Trucks plowed and dumpsters floated by.

I opened all my windows and doors  
to let the heat spill out, and regretted  
that air-conditioning did not run on gas.

Kalika said, Derrick died, morphine murdered.

Rain fell heavy, and thunder snapped  
in a burst of bliss that turned  
a tree into burnt wood and splinter.

My lover paged me to pleasure her  
for two hours after a walk along a dry river  
that had turned to moving mud.

A large owl flew up in our faces,  
and crossed over the bright moon.

I brought posole and a fat  
slice of four grain.  
She is a twig I'm afraid I will snap,  
but she is hard wood.

## **Mortar and Pestle**

Bisbee

The morning after I ignored  
the flame of your body  
you asked me if I'd ever  
had too much love.

For nine months I studied  
the secrets of your body  
like an alchemist seeking  
the philosopher's stone.  
But, no amount of rubbing  
would turn your lead into gold.

Two dozen wounded women  
flipped through my mind,  
and I realized my sad choices  
met their hopeless longing.

I've whittled on this stone  
for 25 years, but it seems like  
rain wearing a mountain  
to a sandy plane.

Even though I change myself  
the world doesn't seem to.  
No amount of rubbing  
turns their lead into gold.

Your question left me  
feeling like Charon  
in a lonely wooden boat  
on a dark, dark sea.

**the Five Elements of Blossoming**  
for Kabir

“Love is the only  
thing of value  
in this world,” says Kabir.

Dry July winds  
blew across  
dead cotton fields,

and I slept lonely nights,  
frozen in a crystal  
matrix of hard lines.

A vast emptiness  
echoed inside, where  
there was nothing,

not even crisp seeds  
to grate against  
a brittle skin.

At the end of my road  
I slept on a ledge  
above high tide,

beneath an ocean  
of stars that reached  
out and touched me.

They sang all night,  
“love is the only  
thing of value.”

Monsoon rains fell diluting  
the fire left in desert rocks  
by the summer sun.

I sought peace and quiet  
in the roar and whine  
of the late-night city,

and found it, inside,  
like melting snow.

A stream of glacial milk  
glistened down the center  
of the peaceful valley of my mind.

Light shines  
from that deep blackness.

Like liquid obsidian  
I have grown fluid  
and glassy smooth.

I send this wave rippling  
across the sea to the hearts  
of the few who know,

love is the only  
thing of value  
in this world.







Jeff Brooks has spent most of his life in the Southern Arizona desert. Rain, which is a significant feature of that desert, partly because of its scarcity, is a central icon in Mr. Brooks' poetry. In this collection of poetry it is the source of sustenance and a lover, it is the mother and a deep mystery, a power and an elemental, a witness and a companion.