



Chapter One

1980S & 90S

As a poet in the late 80s and living in Raton, New Mexico after college, I only wrote two poems. I hadn't yet embraced myself as a poet and didn't see poems all around me.

But when I moved to Albuquerque in 1991 and participated in the Rio Grande Writing Project in 1992, my poetry exploded. I began seeing poetry everywhere.

I include here a poem I wrote for my second husband and read at our wedding. Sadly, we divorced.

In 1993, Jeanne Greenhouse, Eleanor Schick, and Carol Kreis, who I learned from in the Rio Grande Writing Project, honored me by asking me to join the staff as a teacher for the workshop that summer. Afterwards, I attended two advanced workshops in 1994 and 1995.

One fun-filled activity we did while attending the Writing Project was a Drive-By Poetry Reading on Central Avenue across from the University of New Mexico—a very busy intersection. We stood on the street corner in front of the Frontier

Restaurant and read poetry to anyone who walked (drove) by!
We shocked students, professors, everyone!

I saw poetry everywhere!

VISITING A POEM THIRTY-EIGHT LATER

Thirty-eight years ago, I wrote this poem after my memorable adventure in Cobá, Mexico in the summer of 1985. Laying solemnly unattended on my computer, it haunted me for many years because of my surreal experience there.

After studying the genre of magical realism at Colorado State University with my Spanish literature teachers, it fascinated me—reality with a dash of magic.

So, what is magical realism:

"Within a work of magical realism, the world is still grounded in the real world, but fantastical elements are considered normal in this world. Like fairy tales, magical realism novels and short stories blur the line between fantasy and reality."*

* <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-magical-realism#what-is-magical-realism>



Look Closely—I am standing on the middle of Cobá, Mexico

Cobá—I Was There!!

Written - March, 1986

Revised – July 25, 2021

The year was 1985.

Walking down an overgrown jungle path
with my friend Lynn,
an iguana crosses my trail—
toucan birds grunt and croak

above my head,
 nestled in the canopy.
A turn in the footpath, thick over-growth
 blocks the sun for a minute.
 Shadows, sounds, smells—
 transport me back to 900 A.D.

A shiver pierces my soul.
Decked in colorful dress, Mayans step out
 of the past,
 brush against me.
 The hair on my arm stands up
 with that soft touch.
I stare at crumbled ruins—crumbled times—
 straining to see with my eyes their faces
 and hear with my ears their voices.

The bees buzz in the tops of the trees.
 Where am I?
 When?
 With whom?
A step back in time, yet caught in between!
 Is it 1985 or 900 A.D.?
 or somewhere in between?

Had I been here before?
 At this spot,
 centuries before,
 standing at the foot of this temple,
 surrounded by my fellow Mayans,

 worshipping the god "Chac" and
 listening to the familiar

squeaks of birds
and the laughter
of howling monkeys.

The smell of incense fills the air—the mingled
odor of honey and grain
my sacrifice to my god.

The drums beat, beat, beat a familiar
steady cadence,
draws me to it,
echoing my own heartbeat,
and calls me to it.

The priests chat, chat, chat soft sounds
that join the
bass beat of the drums.

The Mayan language a mystery to me
yet I know its deep meaning.

I sway to the beat, the chat.

It vibrates in my soul, calling me forth
through the ages,
crashes past time's barrier!

Dark bronze skin glistens in the firelight.

Brown eyes search our faces for safety.

Flat foreheads surprise me
with their symmetry.

I marvel at the feathery head dresses
with multiple colorful gowns.

I join the celebration,
the ceremony!

Small, sturdy people crowd around me,
greet me in a soft, rhythmic tongue.

Gently, friendly—a spark shines
in their eyes with recognition!
We stand eye-to-eye!

THEY KNOW ME! I'm among my own.
I'm home!!!

I rejoice in our reunion. My light skin shines
in contrast to my bronze-skin brothers
and sisters.

How can I explain our connection?

We are centuries apart,
tribes apart,
languages apart.

Yet, here I am,
at home
and satisfied
like never before.

I marvel at the ceremony,
the rhythm
the music
the smells
the community.

I have never felt more
at peace with myself
and my world.

But it can't be!
I grew up in Colorado.
Not Mexico
Not years ago

Not Mayan

"Did you hear that? What was that?"
my friend grabs my arm.

TRANSPORTED BACK
GONE

REALITY, or is it?
I'm back. 1985.

The jungle's summer heat presses in,
the sun's scorching heat.
Eerie sounds and hums flow
through the air.
Eerie, yet familiar.

I strain to hear it better
to hear the beat of the past,
to see those familiar eyes.

I want to return!
But can I?

A MODERN-DAY PILGRIMAGE TO CHIMAYÓ

April 20, 1991

A modern-day pilgrimage to a
very holy New Mexico spot for Good Friday—
El Santuario de Chimayó!

I drove a car; others did, too!
I worried I'd be the only one not walking.
I drove 180 miles from Raton, New Mexico—
anticipating, wondering
about how absurd this waste of a day was
yet compelled to go.

Traditional pilgrims—walking miles
sore feet and backs,
walking sticks!
Sweat, blisters, and dedication.

I studied the faces as I passed;

later, as I stood in line with them—
old wrinkle faces who had done this
many times before,
the young being introduced to
a lifelong tradition,
families—sharing a meaningful experience,
an event mixed with the air of reverence
and the joy of a picnic,
mostly Hispanics, solemn.
Cowboys, hats, horses—hopeful,
shorts, backpacks—water bottles,
Anglos—capturing a borrowed tradition.
Dogs on leashes. An expectant atmosphere.
National Guard men caring our two flags—
blowing in the cool mountain breeze,
United States—red, white, and blue
New Mexico—red and gold
waving softly.

After driving 173 miles,
anticipation mounted.
Finally, I first saw pilgrims
at the east edge of Santa Fe—
a sprinkle. A few deserted vehicles parked
along the roadside.
The farther west I drove,
the more pilgrims there were.
Steadily, the number increased,
the closer we got to Chimayó.

Clouds hung low,
threatening snow on this spring day.
We arrived;

although I was alone in my car
with Windy, my ten-pound poodle.
I felt a part—a piece of
something so holy and special—
a part of a deep, reverent belief
in a beautiful celebration.

Finding a spot, I parked, pulling off
of the main road.
I followed the hordes of people;
I followed the sounds.
A priest spoke the words of the day on a PA
system that could be heard from a distance.
I dropped down the hillside on a worn path
into the sleepy village and

El Santuario De Chimayó.

Thousands of people—milling around,
some in line waiting to enter,
eating spicy burritos.
Some accomplished their task
and enjoyed the leisure time afterward.

Large, wet snowflakes drifted down lazily,
a New Mexico mountain spring gift.

I stood in line—silent, hopeful, drinking it all in,
anticipating the event I had
driven three hours for, yet wondering.
The Spanish language caught my ear—

the rhythmic voicing of words,
so beautiful!

First, we passed through an old wooden gate,
worn and sacred,
touched by hands that came seeking,
old, dilapidated, and marked
with weather and time.
No rush, no hurry, no worry!

I touched it.
I touched life and pain and times before me.
Other hands had touched it.
Thousands of hurting, hopeful people ready
for the blessings this place had.

Step by step, we meandered our way
into the courtyard, a cemetery.
They buried people here in this place,
special and honored.
Trees shaded this place—peaceful and serene.

We neared the door to the sanctuary,
closer and closer.
Massive wooden doors guarded
this mountain treasure.

Finally, I entered.
The dirt floor inside the door slanted
downward.
A charged energy—anticipation—
filled the air—
solemnity of the moment.

No voices, only a holy silence.
Incense, chili, burning cedar—
luscious smells mixed
with our anticipation.
People expectant of something—
possibly a miracle.

Wooden carvings lined the walls of the church.
Faded, colorful pictures—
powerful meaning to those familiar,
sacred stories told.

Shoulder to shoulder, two lines threaded
towards the altar.
People sat in the pews
praying,
absorbing the spirit of the place.

As we approached the altar, first,
something appeared
as diamonds lying there,
sparkling and shine.
Then I realized—bags of dirt,
holy dirt
healing dirt.
Why I came!

Finally, the altar rail—
I'm there!

As I touched the bag that was mine,
I felt it, the power.
On the altar, a bulto¹ stood, El Señor Santiago,

riding his horse, sacred.

We slowly threaded our way
into a small side room.

Oh, be careful—low door.
Then, another small room to the side.

The source of this holy soil,
the hole in the ground.
I knelt down and touched it,
prayed with it in my hand,
rubbed it in my fingers,
wondering what I could do
to commemorate this moment—
pray, sing, dance, or scream for joy?
No, out of the place—not appropriate.
Silence filled the room,
the church.

Upon leaving, I passed through a room,
lined ceiling to floor with evidence—
thankful letters, abandoned crutches,
and braces!
So many pieces of
evidence of healings—
miracles!



I left the church; I walked around the grounds,
shaded with tall cottonwood trees,
almost in a daze.

Light, puffy clouds still filled the blue sky.
I felt so peaceful,
 connected,
 grounded to the Earth.
My hands still dirty and moist.
Alone, no one knew my name—
 yet a part of something,
 larger than me!

I wanted to stay!
 To drink in the peaceful liqueur,
 to watch more and soak it all in,
 but the snow returned.

Reluctantly, I left—to go north home.
Windy slept peacefully in the passenger seat
 but happy for my return.

The mystery of this age-old tradition filled me.
 My healing came with a connection with
 like-minded people
 a sacred place
 and my God!

A day taken from my busy schedule.
 A step back in time
A day spent alone—yet apart,
 reflecting—
 listening from my heart—
 and fulfilling a dream—

**Good Friday at
The Santuario de Chimayó**

MY LOVE POEM TO MIKE,

My Wedding Day Poem to Misha

June 20, 1992

It is possible! Such a positive message was given
to me, one and a half years ago.

By me, by my higher power—
who knows? I'm not sure!

It didn't include your name, your height,
and weight,
but it was you.

Today, I'm sure of that.

Brought together in Albuquerque.

A country girl just moved here,
A Florida boy who found healing and health
here.

What brought us together to the special
moment of commitment
on June 20 at 1:30 PM?

This date, Mike and I arranged.

The time was suggested by my dad,
remembering my grandmother's
superstition about getting married
when the hands of the clock were
going up; therefore, 1:30, not 1:00.

Good luck to the newlyweds!

The circumstances of our meeting,
neither of us controlled.
God's divine hand arranged the specific details.
Common ground—interests, loves,
needs, passions.

"Are you going to nurture this relationship?"
he was asked by a loving friend.

Can we? Is it possible?

Early on, I knew I loved Mike;
I needed Mike;
I wanted him!

But are we individually doomed—
to sabotage a good thing?
to abandonment?
to aloneness?
FOR LIFE!

What brought us to this moment of marriage?
Mike's desire to do the honorable thing,
grounded in a lifelong commitment.
My desire to be with Mike
in a permanent way.

Today, on June 20,
I commit to you, Mike, my dear,
to nurture our relationship,
our lives,
our lives!
I commit to run towards you,
not away from you
FOREVER!

Jealously, I will protect us—
from the stalking enemy—
the destroyer of happiness
and the good,
recognizing well
it just might be us!

I love you, Mike.
You're my precious gift from God.
It is possible!
Today, I know that and celebrate it.
And I want to spend the rest of my days—
in the shadow of your strong arms—
and circled around me and my heart—
next to you, committed to our
common goal in life—
close to you,
because that's home to me!

WELCOME HOME, MISHA!
WELCOME HOME, LARADA!
IT IS POSSIBLE!

.....
DAD
.....



Harold Horner, my dad

1990s

Your stately frame
like a windmill stood
omnipresent in my life
and childhood.
The wind of time battered and beat

your tall frame,
only to make you more
productive and vital.
The sounds of your workings
clamored loudly in my life,
and oil was needed often to
keep you runnin'—
the oil of understanding &
Love.

HIGH HEELS

1990s

I gave up high heels years ago—
I love their look
perky & sexy,
grown-up!

I had dreamed a little girl's dream
to wear them
in the grown-up world,
not in play.

So, I did—
for years!
Much of the time
I still felt like
the little girl dressing up,
though!

I gave them up—
practicality
pain
comfort!

The little girl misses the moments
they produced!

SAILS DANCE

1990s

Sails dance across the
 silvery water.
Lilac smells caress the soft
 spot in my heart.
The bridge between my
 heart and head closed today.
I drink from the well of wisdom
 and fly high
 above the clouds.
Pain oozes out of my pores.
 And I shudder as I'm
 caught as a receiver of
 words.
I try not to conceal it
 from you, as I seek the
 depth of love.

Your eyes shine with love
and pluck the pain
from me!

SLENDER LIPS



Mattie Jesse Horner, My great grandmother

1990s

Slender lips
that mirror hers.
I am her,
Great grandmother Jesse.

Linked to my dad's dad,
as mother and granddaughter,
Linked through the years by spirit.

Her frame pictures me
because I am her.
Familiar eyes stare at me—
mine
Slender, identical lips—
identical pain?

Deceived by love
lonely by nature.
I never met her,
but she is me.

As my life unfolds,
will it be dark?
will my lips be pursed?
will death capture me?
through painful adversity?

Does her spirit rule me—
Am I really her?

YEARS & SILENCE

1990s

She looked over his shoulder
lost in their silence,
seeking conversation with
what her eyes saw—
over his right shoulder.

He sat, head bowed
eyes down,
looking at his food
then the floor to the left of her
but never at her.

They both ate toast and drank
coffee—a morning ritual,
simultaneously layering
jelly on their toast—
something done for years!

Yet no words, no need to break
the silence morning offered.

There was no hostility between
them,
only silence and years!

Now, a word,
a nod!

Simple conversation and sharing!

A PART OF ME DIED

November 8, 1994

Hollow—that's the only way I can describe it
HOLLOW—AND EMPTY!!!!

I know that a part of me died
sometime
somewhere
for some reason.

It scares me.

A NEW MEXICO DESERT BREEZE

May 31, 1995

A warm summer breeze softly kisses my skin—
no relief from the heat of the desert.
Warm breeze that burns and bothers me.

Not like a cool Colorado mountain breeze
or high New Mexico mountain breeze
that refreshes and
cools in bright sunshine.

Warm breeze blowing—
defines the word "sultry."

A trickle of sweat down my back,
a bead on my forehead,
then another one!

The warm breeze doesn't cool or comfort.

It nags,
teases,
urges my body—TO SWEAT!

To cool myself down,
to refresh myself,
to relieve me!

My body can do that!

Warm breeze—no relief.

I LIKE IT!