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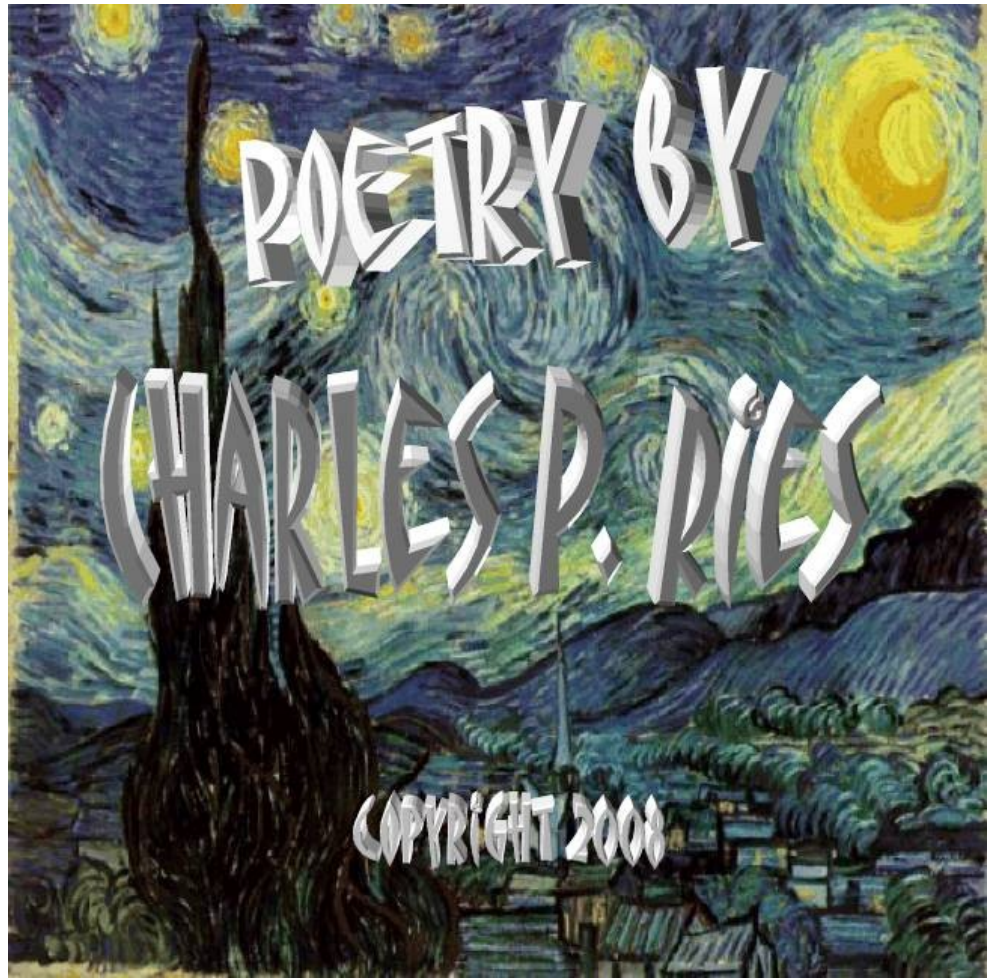
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## Exit Strategy

Elaine took me to her German psychic,  
as expected, she saw *everything*.

Our bad days and our glories.  
The history of our times and species;  
we have been together  
for generations.

Realizing how long I have been with Elaine  
made me feel tired – I didn't realize we'd been  
working things out for over 400 years.  
That's a long time to accommodate a sentient being,  
I don't care what form I was in; me as:

Her cat

Her dog

Her sister

Her butler

Her mother

Her hair stylist

Gerta saw it all against her inner astral cineplex.

I didn't know I was once a charming pistol packing pescalero  
a handsome Mexican bandit who charmed Elaine  
(*in an earlier even more succulent form*)  
to indulge my desires.

Irresistible under a vast pecan tree.  
*My sombrero tossed casually to the side*  
The Milky Way strung over our heads.  
I pick the flower she willingly offers me.

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We melt into the warm night – two sentient beings  
as happy as two sentient beings could ever be.

She, the sheriff's daughter  
virgin, sixteen, flawless  
filled with secret flames

Me, hanging from a pecan tree  
limp, twitching, forlorn  
looking a bit bewildered

*My sombrero tossed hurriedly to the side*

Too many lives to hold in one small boat.  
Yet on we sail, east to paradise  
fighting our way toward enlightenment,  
the only exit strategy  
for two weary souls.

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## **Fictions**

You will love me forever, until you became  
bored with predictability and leave me  
for a man who plays board games and  
grows the best pot you ever smoked

After being beaten  
my belief in mother love falters  
only eleven years old  
and exhausted by her love  
I simply forgive

Even animals must flee when frightened

Falling out of mind  
into life  
they are orphans

Mysteries of mind leaving me silent  
as I await further direction

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## **Ideas of Grace**

Moments of desolation when life and love collide  
drowning us beneath the weight of their inevitability

You pause and look back at me as if I were cancer  
How can this be?  
Why is this happening?  
Who do you think you are?  
Isn't history the antidote for bad judgment?

Fidelity is so fluid these days  
So much expected in return

I tell you about my parents  
My long suffering mother  
My long silent father  
Married 58 years until death  
"Those were days of denial, when relationship  
was abduction and silence a woman's ransom."

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I don't argue    I hide my point of view

How could you understand  
there is glory in surrender  
if made for harmony

Or that the liberation of the blind  
is conceived in a bed of forgiveness

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## Saks Fifth Avenue

Time moves so slowly as we wait for  
our loved ones to exit the dressing room  
- again.

Exotic birds parade before us  
Tight fitting  
    Low riding  
        Up lifting  
            Miracle bras  
Moving in synchronous motion  
from rack to stack.

My male comrades and I  
warm the bench.  
We're the second stringers.  
Shoes  
    Accessories  
Lingerie,  
Lipstick  
Eye shadow.  
You exit a new woman.

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## Right Foot into Wings

My worst curse - immobility.  
Crutches and no car for six weeks.  
The basement writing room has  
become a sensory deprivation chamber.

Even my pain medication haunts me -  
midgets in white doctors' jackets chasing  
me with whips offering me more pills.

All I can do is - hop hop hop.

"You needed this." Elaine tells me.  
"A divine light will appear, a voice in  
the night, an angel will come, you'll be  
forever changed. You want to change  
don't you? You could use a little changing  
you know. Think transubstantiation's easy?  
Huh? Do you? How about making the move  
from caterpillar to butterfly? Think that's  
so easy? Stop complaining and be glad  
you have one good foot."

No pity down here in the deprivation chamber.  
Shut up and take it like a man.  
Life's a trash can – deal with it.

Alone in the basement – hop hop hop.

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Entertaining pain medication dwarfs – hop hop hop.  
Writing fiction only a fleeting idea – hop hop hop.

Six weeks until transubstantiation lift off.  
Fly to Mexico amidst clouds of Monarchs.  
Butterfly wings better than any right foot.

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## My Cat's Human

(November 21, 2006)

I would tell my daughters, "That's the luckiest cat in the world;  
she's so dumb she'd die if she ever stepped foot out the door."

I guess even she knew that the day I left the front door open by mistake,  
freedom beckoned as she stared out into the wild world knowing it wasn't for her.

I didn't pet her; she didn't like to be petted. I freshened her water.  
My daughters were always too busy to do it. She was my daughters' cat.

No one brushed her dreadlocks; the matted clumps that grew worse  
as she aged, slowed down, and slept more. So I did.

I grew up on a mink farm. I don't love animals. What are they good for except  
to eat and wear?

She'd sit next to my desk as I'd write, and stare, and talk to no one. She'd sleep  
outside my bedroom waiting for me to wake up; scratching the door if I was late.

She didn't get smarter with time. After thirteen years she was still just a dumb cat.  
Well, animals are all pretty dumb aren't they?

Yesterday she didn't get up from the place where she'd plant herself until I got home;  
the spot at the top of the steps where she seemed to be glued as if she were waiting for  
someone to come in the front door.

When I called Elaine to say the Vet had just put Princess down, I made a joke about  
her corny name; and started to weep. That was when I realized she'd made me her human.

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