BookGist Summary

"When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought..."

by Richard Sinay

Genre: Poetry

Key Takeaways

• The collection is built around the emotional contrast in Shakespeare's Sonnet 30: memory can reopen grief, while love can briefly restore what loss has taken.

• Love is presented as something that grows through time, trust, care, shared routines, and physical tenderness—not merely as sudden attraction.

• The poems turn ordinary experiences and objects—beaches, a morning cup of coffee, a quarter, a sock, a charm, and a hotel room—into containers for memory and affection.

• Romantic longing is often intense and vulnerable: the speaker waits for replies, fears rejection, and imagines reunion, revealing how deeply hope and uncertainty can coexist.

• The book follows love across decades, from youthful courtship and heartbreak to rediscovered affection, marriage, and care during hardship.

• Family relationships are central to the speaker's understanding of love: poems celebrate his children's milestones while later poems mourn estrangement from children and grandchildren.

• The speaker treats poetry as a way to preserve experience. Writing allows past relationships to be revisited and feelings to be expressed long after the original moment has passed.

• The collection resists a tidy account of love: gratitude, idealization, humor, regret, insecurity, and sorrow appear side by side, reflecting the unevenness of lived relationships.

Who Should Read This Book

This collection will appeal to readers of personal, confessional poetry and anyone interested in how love changes across a lifetime. Readers who enjoy romantic poems, family memoir, or writing that turns ordinary objects and places into emotional symbols will find much to connect with here. The poems may also resonate with people reflecting on first love, reunion, marriage, parenthood, separation, or the difficult hope of repairing family relationships. Unlike a tightly unified narrative or a formally consistent poetry collection, this book preserves poems from different decades and stages of life, including their changing voices, circumstances, and levels of polish. Its organizing principle is emotional rather than plot-driven: love's happiness and grief are allowed to stand beside one another. Readers seeking literary experimentation may find it more direct and autobiographical than highly crafted contemporary collections, while those who value candor, accumulated memory, and the intimacy of a life recorded in verse may find its chronological breadth especially rewarding.

Chapter Summaries

Sonnet 30

Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 serves as the collection's emotional blueprint. Its speaker revisits old losses and finds that remembering can make former grief feel newly painful; at the end, however, thinking of a dear friend restores what sorrow seemed to have taken. The poem establishes the book's central movement between mourning and consolation. Sinay's choice of this sonnet frames the poems not as a simple celebration of romance, but as a record of how love and loss remain connected in memory. Its final turn toward joy anticipates the collection's two-part structure: first the pleasures of love, then the pain of its absence.

Introduction

Sinay explains that the book gathers poems written over many years, recovered from journals, letters, and emails. Revisiting them brought back the feelings and relationships that inspired them. He found that many were addressed to women he loved, and he organized the collection around the two dominant emotional experiences in those poems: the joy of loving and the sadness of losing love. The introduction also sets modest expectations. The poems are not presented as technically perfect works, but as honest expressions of what the author

felt at the time. Sinay hopes readers will encounter emotions recognizable from their own lives—sometimes happiness, sometimes sorrow—and emphasizes that the collection contains more poems of love's joy than of its grief.

Part I: First Love and Early Courtship

The early poems portray love as a discovery that unfolds gradually. In "Love's Gentle Growth," affection develops like a flower, moving from a first kiss toward deeper intimacy; "My Love for Thee" compares trust and care to the steady growth of a tree. Other poems focus on the beloved's eyes, smile, voice, and beauty, using images drawn from nature and romantic literature. The speaker's feelings are often youthful and exuberant. In "We Walked Along the Sandy Beach," a shared walk becomes a memory that seems to last beyond the original afternoon, while "Morning Love" finds intimacy in a simple greeting over coffee. These poems suggest an actionable idea that recurs throughout the book: love is made durable through small, repeated gestures as much as through grand declarations.

Part I: Romantic Ideals, Desire, and Partnership

As the early love poems develop, Sinay considers what love should require. "Love is not Love…" argues that love must be lived and experienced before it can be understood, while "One Pillar, Not Two" questions whether a relationship can thrive when two people remain isolated in their independence. "Pillars of Love," by contrast, imagines a bond in which two distinct people support one another through time and separation. The section also moves between idealism and physical desire. Shakespearean references appear in poems such as "If I Am Your Shakespeare" and "You and Shakespeare Would Have Loved," while "Pallas Athena (Minerva)" playfully asks the goddess to restrain the speaker's passion. "To the Movies" humorously narrows romance to a modest shared activity, showing that the speaker's idealized language is accompanied by self-mockery and everyday detail.

Part I: Love, Family, and the Work of Caring

Later poems broaden love beyond courtship. "Jenny" celebrates the speaker's daughter through affectionate details of her laughter and personality, while "Learning to Love" connects his own childhood loneliness to his determination to give his children the affection he lacked. Its closing image—children receiving hugs and hearing "I love you"—makes care a deliberate practice shaped by personal history. The poems for Heidi and Brian record love through family milestones and support. A birthday poem to Heidi acknowledges periods of distance and emotional difficulty before affirming their friendship and marriage. The long tribute to Brian's path toward Stanford recounts childhood sports, golf tournaments, international trips, and the achievement of a goal he had set as a boy. Together, these works show affection expressed through presence, encouragement, and attention to another person's growth.

Part I: Rediscovered Love

In poems written around 2003–2014, an earlier love returns to the speaker's life after decades apart. "Our Souls' First Meeting" looks back to 1965, describing an immediate attraction, the burial of that affection, and its later revival. "Laguna Beach" transforms a place associated with longing into a site of reunion: the passing ship that once symbolized absence now gives way to the beloved's return. The reunion is rendered through concrete objects and settings. A quarter dated 1965 becomes a seemingly chance link to the year they met; a heart charm recalls a lost relationship; a room becomes the witness to an extraordinary encounter. "Two Time Zones" captures the strain of living far apart, while "The Secret Box" imagines long-kept feelings released by the beloved's voice. These poems show memory as active: it can preserve attachment, but it can also make present-day reunion feel charged with the past.

Part I: Tina and Lasting Companionship

The later love poems celebrate Tina through warmth, humor, gratitude, and shared domestic life. "To Miss Sunshine" describes how her kindness, intelligence, and laughter brighten the speaker's days. Other poems name the everyday pleasures that make up their partnership: watching television, playing golf and Yahtzee, baking cookies, caring for one another, and looking forward to another morning together. This affection is not presented as untouched by hardship. Poems from 2017 onward express fear of losing Tina and admiration for her resilience during a difficult period. The collection's final poem, "My Sunshine Girl," insists on her continuing presence and the life she brings to those around her. The speaker's love is therefore both celebratory and attentive: he praises not just an idealized beloved, but a companion whose care and courage shape their shared life.

Part II: The First Experience of Heartbreak

The first poems in the section, written in 1969, depict a young speaker confronting abandonment. In "My Lost Love," a recorded voice announcing "I am moving on" becomes a physical shock. "A Sailing Ship" and "A Loss of Heart" extend the heartbreak into seascapes: the beloved departs by ship, the speaker waits on the beach, and the ocean seems to swallow the relationship. The pain also takes the form of confusion, resentment, and disbelief. "A Change in My Mental State" describes waking in distress and struggling with perceived wrongs, while "How Trite She Spoke" searches for evidence that the former beloved may still remember their shared past. "Indifference" distills the asymmetry of heartbreak: a moment that means everything to one person may mean almost nothing to the other. These poems establish loss as both an emotional wound and a struggle to interpret what happened.

Part II: Waiting, Uncertainty, and Emotional Barriers

Several poems explore the suspended state between hope and rejection. "In The Dark, I Wait" makes the beloved's presence a light that might dispel loneliness; "The Oppressing Times" portrays unanswered affection as a slow pressure on the heart and self-esteem. "Love's Uncertainty" and "Readiness is All" recognize that love depends on another person's choice

and timing, not simply on the speaker's desire. The section also considers the defenses people build after disappointment. "Walls" describes emotional barriers as protection that can also destroy the possibility of connection. "Love Lost" identifies a relationship's end through small signs: shared activities no longer bring joy, and gestures of closeness feel empty. In "Old Dishes," a cracked dish becomes an image of a woman who feels used and set apart, turning the wear of domestic life into a quiet portrait of marital loneliness.

Part II: Renewed Longing and Personal Loss

The 2004 poem "Waiting…" returns to the earlier love story, now shaped by reunion, distance, and the delays between visits and replies. Its speaker recalls waiting for the beloved to return from overseas and later waiting through months and seasons to see her again. The poem connects present anxiety to old patterns, showing how a rekindled relationship can revive not only affection but also the pain of separation. In later poems, the focus widens to failures and family estrangement. "Nothing but a Failure" lists disappointments in work, marriage, teaching, golf, and relationships with grandchildren, presenting regret as a cumulative burden. "Lost: A Sad Dream" turns separation from family into a dream of missed trains, a tunnel, and a broken phone connection. "Cause of Death: Broken Heart" imagines medical investigators finding no physical explanation for a man's death, then naming grief as the cause. These poems portray emotional suffering as deeply embodied and tied to the speaker's sense of belonging.

Part II: Family Estrangement and Closing Reflections

The collection ends with "Happy Father's Day," a raw, direct account of feeling rejected by children and grandchildren. The speaker compares himself with public figures and others who remain celebrated despite their flaws, arguing that apologies have not restored his family relationships. The poem's refrain-like repetitions communicate both anger and bewilderment, while its closing wish for recognition underscores how unresolved the loss remains. The author biography places these personal poems alongside Sinay's broader work. A longtime English and reading teacher in Orange County, he has written memoir, educational books, travel writing, and a book about family estrangement. The biography helps explain the collection's attention to teaching, parenthood, memory, and relational distance, while the book itself closes without resolving every loss: love can remain present even when reconciliation is uncertain.

Notable Quotes

> *"“Poetry is how we make love with words.”"*

Full Summary

Shakespeare’s Sonnet 30 gives the collection its emotional pattern. In its first twelve lines, the speaker summons old grief and finds that memories make past losses hurt again: vanished hopes, dead friends, and former sorrows must be mourned as if they were new. Then the final couplet changes everything. Thinking of a beloved friend restores what was lost and ends sorrow, at least for a moment. Richard Sinay says this movement from pain to joy captures the poems that follow: one part celebrates love, the other records its absence. Gathering his poems meant searching through journals, letters, and emails, where he found that more than half had been written to women he loved. Reading them again returned him to the feelings of those relationships. The poems might not be perfect, he acknowledges, but they preserve what he felt when he wrote them, and some still stir him years later. Love, in his account, can fill the heart and make it vibrate, then splinter it when it disappears; the collection leans toward joy, though it does not pretend that sorrow is avoidable.

The earliest poems, many written in college or soon afterward, imagine love as something that unfolds rather than arrives fully formed. “A Woman’s Heart,” dated 1969, insists that age cannot diminish a woman’s inner beauty. Time may change the body, but her heart remains rich in tenderness, care, and warmth. In “Love’s Gentle Growth,” affection follows the opening of a flower: a first gentle kiss gives way to holding hands, deeper kisses, smiles, and embraces, each nurturing what comes next. “My Love for Thee” makes the same idea more enduring through the image of a tree. A seed is planted in the heart, then grows through repeated greetings and farewells, trust, attention, and caress. Love’s fullness is not sudden; it is fed by the daily acts that allow it to take root.

The young poet also gives language a role in courtship. In “Words of Love,” phrases are bright packages offered on ordinary days, but poetry is a special kind of loving through words. At the same time, “That Gentle Goodness: Love” warns against surrendering blindly to what seems kind. People and appearances can deceive, the poem suggests, so love’s sweetness needs discernment: one must understand its risks before walking willingly into it. The poems balance idealism with a young person’s uncertainty about whether affection can be trusted.

The beloved becomes almost mythic in “My New Love’s Eyes,” where her blue eyes seem at once like pillows, skies, and marbles, yet also speak a thousand truths in a glance. “The New Eve” imagines her as a fresh mother of humanity, crowned by the speaker as queen of a new age. Such poems make romantic attention feel like discovery: the loved woman seems to bring a new world into being. “Love is not Love…” argues that the feeling cannot know itself in a single day. It must be lived, and, if given time to grow, can bloom like spring rather than wither.

That growth is repeatedly attached to places and sensory details. In “We Walked Along the Sandy Beach,” the couple stroll barefoot, pants rolled up, hand in hand, while sea mist touches their faces and waves pound the sand. The beach seems endless in their minds

because the remembered walk can always be revisited in lines of verse. In “Out On the Rocks of Love,” the speaker stands among sharp rocks above the sea, confronting both danger and a wish for rest, then recognizes that he feels alive and wants to love now. Nature becomes a setting in which affection, vulnerability, and the desire to keep living meet. “Is This the Youth of My Love?” turns the beloved into the sun that brings color to the speaker’s world, making each day feel like spring, even in winter.

A domestic morning offers a quieter image of intimacy. In “Morning Love,” dew gathers on an apple as the speaker comes from the barn and sees his beloved yawning and stretching at the kitchen window. She curls like a kitten, drinks coffee with sugar, and greets him; he kisses her head, and she takes his hand and kisses it. The scene’s profundity lies not in grand declarations but in the familiar exchange. “My Summer Loves,” by contrast, sees summer romances in trees that flourish and are later stripped by sharp winds. Another summer may bring new growth, but earlier loves remain in the lines that remember them.

Sinay’s courtship poems move between ardent declaration and awareness that love can change. “Did My Heart Love Till Now?” recalls a summer infatuation that faded, then a longer love of trust that also melted away. Now a new relationship makes the speaker wonder whether his heart had truly loved before. “One Pillar, Not Two” argues that proud independence can leave two people lonely even when they share a life; familiarity and mutual closeness are what bring them together. In “The Door Heart,” he longs for a key to the beloved’s heart, imagining that opening it would begin a new life for them both. A walk in the park lets him picture their future side by side.

Shared time and physical tenderness give these ideals substance. “Talk and a Walk” remembers an evening of conversation beneath trees and leaves, turning the simple act of walking together into something cherished and longed for. “When Gentle Summer Night Does…” joins warm breath, kisses, embraces, and laughter in a night that continues into morning, while “Pillars of Love” imagines two lovers carrying time’s burdens together, distinct yet spiritually united. Fidelity matters too: “You and Shakespeare Would Have Loved” praises devotion to a love that refuses infidelity. But affection can also mean waiting. In “Like the Early Drops of Rain,” the speaker sits alone under a tree as other couples walk hand in hand, trying to find words that might bring his beloved closer.

The romantic ideal is sometimes playful and sometimes openly physical. “Pallas Athena” asks the goddess to bridle the speaker’s passionate heart with a caress and a kiss. “To the Movies” humorously rejects the conventional catalogue of dates—snow, dancing, picnics, long talks, and late-night cookies—before admitting that he only wants to go to the movies with the beloved. In “Nature’s Way,” desire becomes difficult to restrain, though the speaker distinguishes bodily appetite from a wish to possess the beloved’s heart. The small generosity of “Love is…” offers another measure: love means sharing half a cup of tea, half a catch, and

half one’s cookies. Even in later reflection, “Love’s Color” lists the familiar meanings of white, green, red, yellow, and black, then leaves its central question unanswered: what color is love?

In “To Jenny,” written for his first child, Sinay turns the language of courtship toward fatherly affection. He treasures his daughter’s laughter, bright eyes, brown bows, and delight in his jokes, and recognizes that the patience with which he has loved her must continue until she understands how boundless that love is. “Learning to Love” explains what makes such care feel hard-won. Sinay recalls that his own parents never said good night to him; lonely evenings watching people pass left him dreaming of a big house where his children would be wanted. Now, as they sleep, he can give them the hug and the words of love he missed. Love becomes both an inheritance he hopes to pass on and a practice shaped by what he lacked.

The short poem “Love Is” expands that feeling beyond the family: love appears in spring flowers, a beach walk, a song remembered on a busy freeway, and even a note passed from one person to another. It is companionship that can travel through birdsong and poems, making the speaker feel together rather than alone. In a birthday poem to Heidi in 1999, however, care is not presented as effortless. Sinay admits that he loved his wife even during a period when he did not like her, and thanks her for her patience while he returned to himself. She offered emotional steadiness through the turbulence of his mind, cared for their children when he could not or would not, and remained beside him through thick and thin. His gratitude names the labor of marriage as well as its affection.

That same attention to the years of care shapes “Stanford Graduation Day, June 20, 2000,” a father’s account of Brian’s childhood and achievements. Sinay remembers meeting his newborn son at five in the morning, when Brian was alert and ready for the world while his father was still sleepy and unsure. He recalls teaching him to putt at Rancho San Joaquin, supporting his enthusiasm for baseball and soccer, and introducing him to golf. Brian’s early tournament near-miss gives way to victories, Junior World competitions in Japan, and the boy’s determination to attend Stanford. As a teenager, he wins two CIF high-school championships, setting a scoring record, and ultimately receives a Stanford scholarship. The poem records not only triumphs but the shared time behind them: lessons, tournaments, travel, and the father’s repeated regret that he never got to teach Brian basketball. At graduation, he recognizes that his son’s future now belongs to him, while hoping golf will remain part of it.

A different love returns in the poems of 2003 and 2004. In “Shavasana,” lying still in yoga’s resting pose, Sinay watches memories move through his mind: a first meeting that felt like the reunion of two lost friends, walks along the sand, golf, yoga classes, picnics, travel, flowers, and poems. The refrain of attention settles on the beloved herself. “Change of Hearts” makes rediscovery physical and playful: at the gym, Sinay chooses a heart-shaped exercise course, then wonders whether the pulsing heart on the machine is awakening his emotional heart or

merely his thinking mind. He concludes that both have changed since he found her again. In the brief “Nancy,” she becomes every paired point of orientation—beginning and end, opening and closing, front door and back door—and, finally, his love and his life.

The reunion receives its fullest setting in “Room 439.” The room seems to witness two people finding a love from long ago, embracing and kissing, and becoming whole after drifting through life. Sinay imagines the hotel room distinguishing their tenderness from the passing couples it has seen before. At Laguna Beach, a place associated with old pain, ships carry the memory of thirty-five years of longing. Now the beloved stands in his arms, returned to what he calls her home and his; the same beach that once hurt him brings joy. “Our Souls’ First Meeting” reaches back to spring 1965, when a tender smile and a nearly touching foot set his heart racing. He describes a love first felt, later buried, and now felt again, promising that it will endure.

The objects of daily life help hold this renewed attachment in place. A quarter dated 1965 seems to link the chance discovery of a coin to the rare good fortune of finding the beloved again. In “Two Time Zones,” his body is in California while his heart and mind remain in Pennsylvania, and the years 1965 and 2004 become two moments in one continuing love. A voice opens the “Secret Box” in which he had kept his feelings; once released, they bring back kisses, kindness, laughter, and the wish never to be separated again. He calls himself incomplete without her, then dwells on what he misses: her smile, whispers, hands, gentle caresses, and the physical closeness through which their souls seem to touch. On her birthday, he celebrates having met, lost, rediscovered, and loved her again. A silver heart charm recalls a bracelet bought for an earlier love, but now the found charm becomes a promise to stay. His proposal asks for morning smiles, hugs, and kisses as well as marriage. A Valentine’s message shows the vulnerability beneath his confidence: because she has held his heart before, he waits, hoping she will treat it tenderly the second time. He imagines a shared California Camelot, while “The Door of Your Heart” pictures the gradual unlocking of its barriers through poems, calls, letters, gifts, flowers, kisses, and patience.

Years later, the small sock in “The Sock” gives separation a comic, tender image: a tiny stowaway seems to be searching for its partner, just as Sinay still dreams of finding his own other half. By 2016, “To Miss Sunshine” introduces a beloved whose humor, generosity, intelligence, kindness, and laughter brighten his mornings. They laugh together, and he wishes for their shared well-being to last a long time. Tina answers in her own voice in 2017, calling Richard her best friend and recalling their golf, travel, wedding, move to Colorado, and ordinary time together; she looks forward to spending the rest of her life with him. Sinay’s “The Gift” calls her daily love more precious than all the material presents exchanged between them.

Their later poems make lasting companionship vivid through routine and care. He delights in Tina's sunny disposition, good wine, shared house, affection for their dogs, and love of life. At Christmas, he lists their pleasures: news, game shows, movies, golf lessons, and Yahtzee, where her excited shout after a winning roll becomes "Teensie Weensie." His Valentine's poem jokes that without her he would have dirty clothes, an untidy home, loneliness, and no one with whom to watch television or golf, before naming her as the person who cares for him, tolerates his moods, and rubs his back at night. By 2023, he praises her bravery through a Job-like trial and rejoices when her smile returns in the morning. In "My Sunshine Girl," written in 2024, he answers the fear of losing her: her giggle, familiar "un-huh," and warmth remain present, and the love surrounding her is evidence of how deeply she matters.

The joy of remembered love gives way to the pain of being told it is over. In "My Lost Love," a voice from a small recorder delivers the blunt words "I am moving on," and the speaker feels the news as a knife or spear through his chest. The following poems return to the shore, where the sea becomes an image of distance and abandonment: in "A Sailing Ship," the woman has left aboard a vessel that never comes back, while "A Loss of Heart" imagines the speaker's heart sinking into the ocean as he watches for her return. Grief comes with anger, too. He wakes trembling, struggles to regain control, and rereads a letter he considers unjust; even as he tries to laugh at it, he cannot forget what he sees as wrongs done to him. In "How Trite She Spoke," a friend reports that the lost woman still uses the familiar phrase "When Dick and I," perhaps out of habit or some remaining feeling, but the speaker has not seen her again. What meant everything to him, "Indifference" suggests, may have meant almost nothing to her.

In "One Summer Night," the speaker recalls running home after visiting her, imagining a future together before learning she had chosen another man. Yet loss does not erase tenderness. "A Little Love and Rain" holds on to an encounter in which a storm drives the couple under shelter, where a kiss and an embrace make them refuges for each other. "How Shall I Compare Thee?" lovingly catalogs a woman's beauty and character, then punctures its own praise with a teasing remark about her mind. Elsewhere, longing transforms the beach into a stage for reunion: in "Your Return Imagined," he sees his beloved arriving by sailboat, stepping onto the sand and staying with him, no longer launching her love away. The vision is a wish, not a report, but it lets him briefly picture what abandonment has denied him.

The speaker's hope is repeatedly checked by uncertainty. "Fooled Not by Love" casts people as isolated figures adrift, waiting for a message and wanting the security of being together, even as the poem urges them not to mistake love for foolishness. In "In the Dark, I Wait," he sits alone, remembering happiness and blaming himself for having been careless with her passion. He waits for her presence to return like sunlight, hoping for a kiss that will break his loneliness. "The Oppressing Times" makes waiting more punishing: passing hours and days magnify his uncertainty, and he longs for even a small sign of affection, while her guarded

heart turns his warmth into anxious coldness. A Christmas poem shifts to a child surrounded by costly gifts but crying because the mother has forgotten love; the scene turns the holiday's perfect preparations into an image of affection missing where it matters most.

Time cannot easily settle a relationship when one person is unsure. In "Love's Uncertainty," both minds are troubled: he wishes he possessed more of her favor, while she is still searching for truth and a decision. "Readiness is All" asks whether she is prepared to love in the present rather than remain caught in memories of an earlier, more innocent life. "Two Legends," by contrast, finds comfort in a Mississippi steamboat and an island reflected on gray water: their endurance brings the past close enough to ease a lonely morning. The poems also consider the defenses that keep love from taking hold. "Walls" recognizes that people build barriers from past hurt, sometimes to protect themselves, but those same walls can destroy another person's dreams. In "Love Lost," the speaker recognizes an ending through small failures of connection: he can no longer make her laugh, hand-holding feels meaningless, and even preparing a fire separates rather than draws them together. "Old Dishes" gives that estrangement a domestic image. A woman washing dishes remembers meeting her husband, marrying, and raising three children; noticing a crack in an old dish, she imagines it set apart from the unbroken ones, used and alone.

Years later, the speaker's love for a woman from his past is awakened, but reunion does not remove uncertainty. "Waiting…" measures the relationship in delays: he waits for her return from overseas, then waits three months to see her after their feelings revive, then waits through summer and again for a reply. He longs to hear her voice and hold her, while wondering why even a brief answer does not come. Hope and anxiety remain entwined; the depth of the love is revealed not only in reunion but in how much the waiting costs.

The later poems turn from romantic absence to the loss of family. In "Nothing but a Failure," the speaker gathers disappointments across his life—missed career goals, abandoned ambitions, lost competitions, and moments when he believes he failed as a teacher and as a person. But the deepest grief is losing contact with his children and grandchildren. He misses the grandchildren, cries for them, and laments that they do not tell him they love him, despite his conviction that he loved them. "Lost: A Sad Dream" renders separation as a nightmare: riding a black train away from his family, he gets off to reach them on foot and enters an underground tunnel. A phone call briefly brings his son's voice and an invitation to dinner, but the connection disappears. He struggles up the stairs, falls, and finally finds that the phone no longer works; he is left unsure whether he can get home to his family.

"Cause of Death: Broken Heart" imagines doctors unable to explain the death of a healthy man who worked for his family and cared for them when they were struggling. With no medical cause to find, they conclude that his heart was broken. The last poem, "Happy Father's Day," makes the estrangement bitterly personal. The speaker compares himself with

public figures and people he believes behaved worse, yet says he has lost his children and grandchildren anyway. He admits he is not perfect and that he apologized, but cannot make anyone forgive him. The ending holds no easy restoration: the poems preserve his love, regret, and sense of exclusion in the very act of giving them words, keeping both the tenderness he remembers and the losses he cannot undo.

Generated by BookGist.ai • November 2026

www.bookgist.ai