

Not About the Weather

By The Architect
Fall 2025

Introduction

It's never about the weather.

When I write about rain, I am tracing the shape of her absence in the space between droplets. When I document spring snow, I am measuring the distance between expectation and arrival – the same distance I once measured between wanting to speak and finding words insufficient. The meteorological has always been, for me, a convenient grammar for the unspeakable. We stand beneath the same sky and call it different things; what I call atmosphere, she calls mood, and somewhere in that translation lives the truth of how we navigate each other.

These poems span what might be called a long time – thirty years appears more than once, which is either a confession or a boast, depending on whether you believe love is something that wears down or accretes. I have come to understand it as the latter. The rituals accumulate: the cigarette I shouldn't smoke, the umbrella she hands me, the silence that serves as greeting better than words ever could. Each repetition is a kind of proof. Not mathematical proof – I abandoned that certainty long ago – but the proof of presence, the evidence that we keep showing up.

I have attempted something unusual here: the same moment rendered twice, the same coffee growing cold in two different cups. 'Coffee Spiral' exists in two perspectives because memory is never singular. She remembers the chill of that February evening; I remember forgetting my jacket. She recalls the note I left in her textbook; I recall her handwriting on notes she'd leave for me years later. Neither version is more accurate than the other. Both are true. The spiral form suggests that we are always circling back to the same moments, but never from the same angle – and this, perhaps, is what allows thirty years to feel like both an instant and an eternity.

The tree appears throughout these pages – trees understand something about time that humans struggle to accept. They grow in one place. They record history in rings no one sees until after the cutting. They are witnesses that never testify. In the presence of such patience, my own fragmentary observations feel both humble and strangely appropriate.

What I have learned, across these poems and across these years: we never talked about the weather because the weather was always talking about us. The storm that mirrors argument. The clearing that follows forgiveness. The persistent drizzle of ordinary days spent in the same room, reading different books, occasionally looking up to catch each other's eyes. These are not metaphors. They are the actual architecture of a shared life—built not from grand gestures but from the accumulated weight of small moments, each one as unremarkable and essential as rainfall.

A note on form: several of these pieces employ circular structures, returning at their end to where they began. This is deliberate. In the mathematics I once studied, such structures suggest recursion, self-reference, the strange loops that arise when a system contemplates itself. In the life I have lived, they suggest something simpler: that we are always arriving at the same place, and it is always different. The clock stopped at ten after three. Thirty years later, we still see ten after three. The moment persists. We persist within it.

It's always about a girl. It always has been. The weather is just how I learned to say it.

— *The Architect*

Fall 2025

She asked me to remember the rain
So I can remind her of sunlight,
Even though I prefer snowfall
For illuminating a full moon.

I. Forecasts

About. The. Weather.

Saturday. Morning.
Overcast. Muted sunrise.

Eyes closed.

Walked back
To Wednesday
Through clouds crossing a full moon
And an unremarkably green afternoon
To step into Sunday.

To see her. Sunshine

Rolling through her hair
With the lustrous breeze
Reflecting in her squinting eyes
(obscuring their soft color)
As the innocence of her alluring smile
Summons me

To look forward,
Through the dull thunder
And past the barking rain
To the weekend.

With her.

Radiance.

Revolution

While the spring snow whispers
The beat of the archetypal vibe resonates
In the desolation of a celestial breeze –

Too tired to sleep,
Minds too clear to think

About the leafless tree
Waiting for the summer's
Moonless midnight dreaming rhythm

As she softly sings
“It's been a while,
Trace a circle, magic style,
Let the water flow
Through a garden and go”

Into a forest of unimagined reality
Illuminated by shadows, dripping leaves
Impeding the stream of time,
Free(z)ing the radiance of a moment –

Thinking clearly,
Wide awake

In the desolation of a celestial breeze.
The beat of the archetypal vibe resonates
While the spring snow whispers...

II. Rituals and Instruments

Ritual

Listening to the tree bark in the purring rain,
Taking the last drag off my cigarette
(I feel her disappointment)
While I watch her approach –
My ritual.

Her blue umbrella too small
To keep the left sleeve of her faded gray shirt dry
(which I always tell her works better with the
sleeves pulled up to her elbows),
Curly hair pulled back in a loose ponytail as usual
Whenever she wears her thin-rimmed glasses.
On time as always –
Her ritual.

We greet each other with silence –
A head nod, a wink of an eye, a small smile.
Waiting for me to open the door
She hands me the umbrella.
Our ritual.

Imaginary Umbrella

Listening to the tree bark in the purring rain,
Waiting for a sunrise, struggling
To keep my eyes open,
Drifting between the words on the page
And the thought of ...

Coffee, after we share slices of pizza,
Hoping to beat the distant thunder
To the café where we first met
(not our usual moonlit stroll) –

“Don’t let me get wet,” she says
From behind, gripping my shirt.
(It’s inevitable with my imaginary umbrella).

As a raindrop falls we fade
Into seats (at the café?) with drinks
Half-empty (half-full?),
Laughing, Yawning
(we’re not as young as we used to be) ...

Eyes open, awake.
Not quite sunrise.
She’s still asleep, dreaming of ...

Reflection

I

Listening to the tree bark in the purring rain
While I resist the call of a catnap
As the afternoon ennui swims along, drifting
Into my imagination and creating
Atemporal pseudo-memories, unrealities –

Of never strolled evening walks
Just before sunset on a winter evening
Where the chill in the air
Makes her grip my hand tighter
Searching for a little more warmth;

Improvised moments we never shared

At a jazz club where the smell
Of smoke-filled sounds
And muted conversations
Moved us past midnight, dancing
Closer and closer, feeling
The warm touch of her hand in mine

Walking home in the rain ...

To dream while bark of the tree
Absorbs the fading purr of my
Imagined recollections.

II

Listening to the tree bark in the purring rain
While I embrace the call of a catnap
As the afternoon ennui swims along, drifting
Into my imagination and creating
Atemporal pseudo-memories, unrealities –

An evening stroll
Just before sunset on a winter evening
Where the chill in the air
Makes her grip my hand tighter
Searching for a little more warmth;

Improvised moments

At a jazz club where the smell
Of smoke-filled sounds
And muted conversations
Move us past midnight, dancing
Closer and closer, feeling
The warm touch of her hand in mine

Walking home in the rain ...

To dream while bark of the tree
Absorbs the soothing purr
Of an imagined pre-recollection.

III. Witness

Still Life Talking

Still life
Talking
To me every day –

Trees in the ground,
Words on a page.

I read a paper,
Leaves rattle above,
Shaking in the sunlight.

Clouds dance,
Shifting into shapes
Created by imagination
(tantalizing daydreams).

Sounds of footsteps (rhythm),
Laughs of joy (melody),
The notes of a bird's song.
Harmony (the simple tune).

A girl stands covering her mouth
To hide a laugh,
Closes her eyes
To hope no one will
Notice.

A circle of three
Converse freely, quietly
As a squirrel hides its treasure,
Discreetly

And a yipping puppy
Nips at shadows
While a venerable graying dog
Stretches in the shade.

Paths crossed, greetings exchanged –
Waves of recognition,
Acknowledging smiles –
Reflected off the glasses
Of a young lady
(Hopelessly in love).

The tree (roots in the ground)
Watches it all with me,
Recording today's history
(unwritten experiences).

It's still life.

IV. Timepieces

Ten After Three

The clock stopped at ten after three
Two nights after
Autumn's final full moon

Yet the conversation still flowed
As we drifted between words,
Listening to dreams in the breeze,
Trying to freeze the stars in their place,
To indefinitely extend the night.
Hoping to deny the eternal grasp of time.

The polyrhythms of our pulses
Synchronized as we felt
The tantalizing touch of the crisp air,
Evoking a shiver but not enough
To move hands of the clock
Or ours, clasped together, warm,

Wandering, wondering, wandering
Ahead of the morning,
Beyond the third night...

Thirty years later,
We still see ten after three.

No Fall

We never talked about the weather,

Only listened to the lightning
Illuminate the night,
Between the words, into the pauses
Between conversation threads,
Between the soft rolls of thunder,
Between breaths and the glances
We exchanged in the silent solitude
Shared during the summer rain

Or breathed in the humid air,
Feeling the damp grass
Beneath our toes, as we gazed
At the wispy, smoke-like clouds seep
Into a dissipating dream as we awakened
With a soft bump of shoulders
Just before the spring sunrise,

Or stood in the cold sunlight
Admiring the windless tree, wondering
Whether our embracing hands
Will fade and disappear like leaves,
Whether the space between us
Will vanish like shadows after sunset,
As we contemplate where we'll be
On a snowless winter afternoon.

Three Before Ten

The clock stopped at three before ten
Two days before
Spring's first full moon

Yet our footprints still followed
The path we improvised
(forward, back, forward, left, ...)
Over a standard rhythm
Of the equally spaced trees lining our way,
Gliding ahead of the stars
With the free-flowing impulse of time.

Our steps in synch –
Right, right, left, right –
Serenaded by the whispers of the leaves
And guided by the arrows in the trees.
Unbound by time, hands clasped together
In the warm sound of sunlight, we

Wondered, wandered, wondered,
About dreams we'd share,
Ahead of evenings and after full moons...

Thirty years later,
We still dance at three before ten.

V. The Spiral

Coffee Spiral (his perspective)

Coffee, still hot,
She took a slow sip before
Setting it gently on the table
Next to her phone (screen down).

“Tell me about my mother.”
Not the question I expected to hear.

“She’ll be here in about 10 minutes.”
(20 actually, based on years of observations).

An eye roll, a head shake
And a pseudo-smile
(just like her mother) –
Not the answer she wanted.

“Before she bought me a cup of coffee?”
“Indeed.” (usually my line).

“A navy blue hoody, faded jeans
And a dark brown backpack,
That’s what she was wearing,
Holding the (chemistry) textbook
I had just returned
Against her chest
(perhaps I should’ve carried it)
On a late February evening.

Still winter, not quite spring
(and I forgot my jacket).

We progressed down the sidewalk,
Cutting through the courtyard,
Neither of us trying to escape
The serenity of the moment –
No rush, even though her friend was waiting.

It’s beautiful out here, she said.
(The words still beat, resonate).

Yeah. We stopped. Looked up at the stars.
On a beautiful night you can see forever.

Yeah. She looked at me with a slight turn

Of her head, breeze just strong enough
To push her hair back. *Forever.*

I nodded my head. She smiled.

Eventually the breeze
Broke our frozen moment,
Drifted us apart for the evening.”

Across the table I could see her
Nervously sip from her cup
And felt a hand on my shoulder.

“Six months later
I bought him a cup of coffee.”
She arrived early.
(still surprising me).

“For the first time.”
I could see her mother’s smile
As she set the cup down.

Coffee Spiral (her perspective)

Coffee, still hot,
She took a sip before
Setting it gently on the table
Next to her phone (screen down).

“Tell me about my father.”
Now that she was older
She liked hearing stories
At our monthly kaffeeklatsch.

“He listens to jazz music.”
(a taste she acquired from him).

An eye roll, a head shake
And a pseudo-smile –
(a reaction I’d passed on to her).
Not the answer she wanted.

“A winter story?”
“Sure.” (his terse style).

“I needed to get my book to study –
He’d borrow it to do his homework.
It frustrated and amazed me
How he managed to get by with minimal effort.

This time he left his work in it
With a note on top
(the first of the many over the years)
That said *thanks* and *if you need it*. (I did)

Flannel shirt, buttoned up halfway,
Sleeves rolled up to the elbows,
Dark jeans with a rip above the knee –
Didn’t say anything being cold.
I still felt the chill with my hoody –
Holding my (chemistry) book against my chest
Didn’t generate enough heat.

We walked through the courtyard, unconversing,
Toward where my friend was waiting.
A trivial conversation would have disrupted
The tranquility of the moment we were sharing –
The breeze, the cold, the starlight.

Beautiful – the word just flowed with my breath.
We paused. Looked up.

On a beautiful night you can see forever.
He said before we slid our gazes
To each other.
(I've never forgotten how he said it).

Yeah. Forever.
He nodded.
Yeah. Forever.
He repeated.

My friend waving at us
Brought us out of the frozen moment,
Separating us for the evening.”

Across the table I could see her
Rubbing the coffee mug nervously
And felt a hand on my shoulder.

“At the end of that summer
I joined her for a cup of coffee.”
He had decided to join us.
(still surprising me).

“For the first time.”
I could see her father's smile
As she picked up the coffee.

VI. Coda

Contrasts in Unity

She likes coffee hot with light cream,
I let mine cool, do away with steam;
We fill two cups to start each morning
And smile, idiosyncrasies heartwarming.

She wants to speak of Michelangelo
But I'd rather discuss Galileo;
We choose to disagree
And settle on Da Vinci.

She'll make requests in Portuguese
(my weakness) knowing I'll appease;
I'll answer in broken Spanish,
She'll laugh, the tension'll vanish.

She fills pages with drawings, imagination,
While I work to untangle an equation;
We pause for a quick trade of glances,
Finding inspiration in our vocational dances.

Through seasons we've watched years pass,
Growing together through each difference, each contrast.

Epilogue

By The Dreamer

The neuroscience of long-term pair bonding remains one of the most compelling areas of affective research. What the evidence suggests: sustained romantic attachment involves not merely the initial dopaminergic cascade of infatuation but involves interplay among oxytocin-mediated bonding, the literal rewiring of neural architecture through decades of shared experience. The brain of someone in a thirty-year relationship is, in measurable ways, a “different” organ than the brain of someone newly in love. It has been sculpted by proximity, by ritual, by the accumulated weight of ten thousand small moments that individually signify nothing and collectively constitute everything.

This is what The Architect has documented in "Not About the Weather," though he would never use such clinical language. Where I might describe the role of the hippocampus in consolidating episodic memories into the autobiographical self, he writes of clocks stopping at ten after three. Where I would reference studies on synchronized physiological rhythms in long-term couples, he observes "the polyrhythms of our pulses / Synchronized." The scientific and the poetic are not in opposition here; they are parallel languages describing the same phenomenon from different vantage points.

What strikes me most forcefully about this collection is its treatment of ritual. In my research on memory consolidation, I have long been fascinated by how repetition creates neural pathways that eventually become automatic, requiring minimal conscious attention. The Architect captures this process in "Ritual" – the cigarette, the blue umbrella, the silent greeting – describing behaviors that have transcended deliberate action to become embodied knowledge. "Our ritual," he writes, and in those two words encompasses decades of neuroscientific research on procedural memory and habit formation. The couple in these poems no longer chooses their patterns; they have become them.

The "Coffee Spiral" diptych deserves particular attention from anyone interested in the phenomenology of shared memory. My research team has conducted extensive studies on how couples remember the same events differently—not because one partner is wrong, but because memory is reconstructive rather than reproductive. Each time we recall an experience, we are not retrieving a stored file but actively rebuilding the memory from distributed neural networks, influenced by our current emotional state, subsequent experiences, and the very act of remembering itself.

The Architect presents both perspectives of that February evening without privileging either. He remembers forgetting his jacket; she remembers the chemistry textbook pressed against her chest for warmth. He emphasizes the note he left in her book; she emphasizes the rip above his knee. These are not contradictions but complementary encodings of the same temporal event, filtered through different attentional priorities and integrated into different autobiographical narratives. The genius of presenting both versions lies in demonstrating that relational memory is inherently polyphonic—two instruments playing different melodic lines that create harmony only when heard together.

I must confess a personal resonance with these poems that extends beyond professional interest. When The Architect writes of "atemporal pseudo-memories, unrealities" in "Reflection," he articulates something I have experienced but struggled to name: the way imagination and memory become increasingly difficult to distinguish in long-term intimacy. Did that conversation happen, or did I merely imagine it so vividly that it acquired the texture of recollection? The neural mechanisms are remarkably similar – visualization and memory retrieval activate overlapping brain regions – but the experiential implications are profound. We construct our partners as much as we remember them.

The circular structures throughout the collection enact what cognitive scientists call "temporal binding" – the process by which consciousness weaves discrete moments into continuous experience. "Revolution" begins and ends with the same images; "Ten After Three" and "Three Before Ten" mirror each other across thirty years. These are not mere formal exercises but accurate representations of how memory actually operates. The hippocampus does not store experiences chronologically like a filing cabinet; it creates associative networks where a particular scent, sound, or weather pattern can instantly transport us across decades. The Architect's spiraling, recursive forms are more neurologically truthful than linear narrative.

And then there is the weather itself—never discussed, only inhabited. The Architect uses meteorological phenomena the way the brain uses sensory experience: as scaffolding for emotional memory. The amygdala tags experiences with affective significance, and environmental conditions become inextricably linked with the feelings present during encoding. Rain falling during a moment of connection becomes, neurologically, part of the connection itself. This is not pathetic fallacy but accurate phenomenology. When he writes "We never talked about the weather," he is acknowledging that weather was never external to their experience but constitutive of it.

I have known The Architect for over thirty years now, since that spring at Writer's Block when he was still more mathematician than poet, still uncertain whether emotional exploration could coexist with logical precision. This collection resolves that uncertainty definitively. The mathematical observation remains—counting seasons, measuring thirty-year spans, noting the geometry of shared space—but it has been fully integrated with romantic sensibility. The equations have learned to feel.

"Not About the Weather" is, in the end, a document of neural plasticity in action: two consciousnesses gradually reshaping each other through sustained proximity, creating shared structures of meaning that neither could have developed alone. It is also, simply, a love story told by someone who has learned that the deepest truths require the most indirect approaches. The weather is never the subject, only the medium through which the subject becomes speakable.

It's always about a girl, as he would say. And it's always about consciousness adapting to connection, forming new pathways, becoming something it could not have been in isolation. The science confirms what the poems already know.

— *Fall 2025*