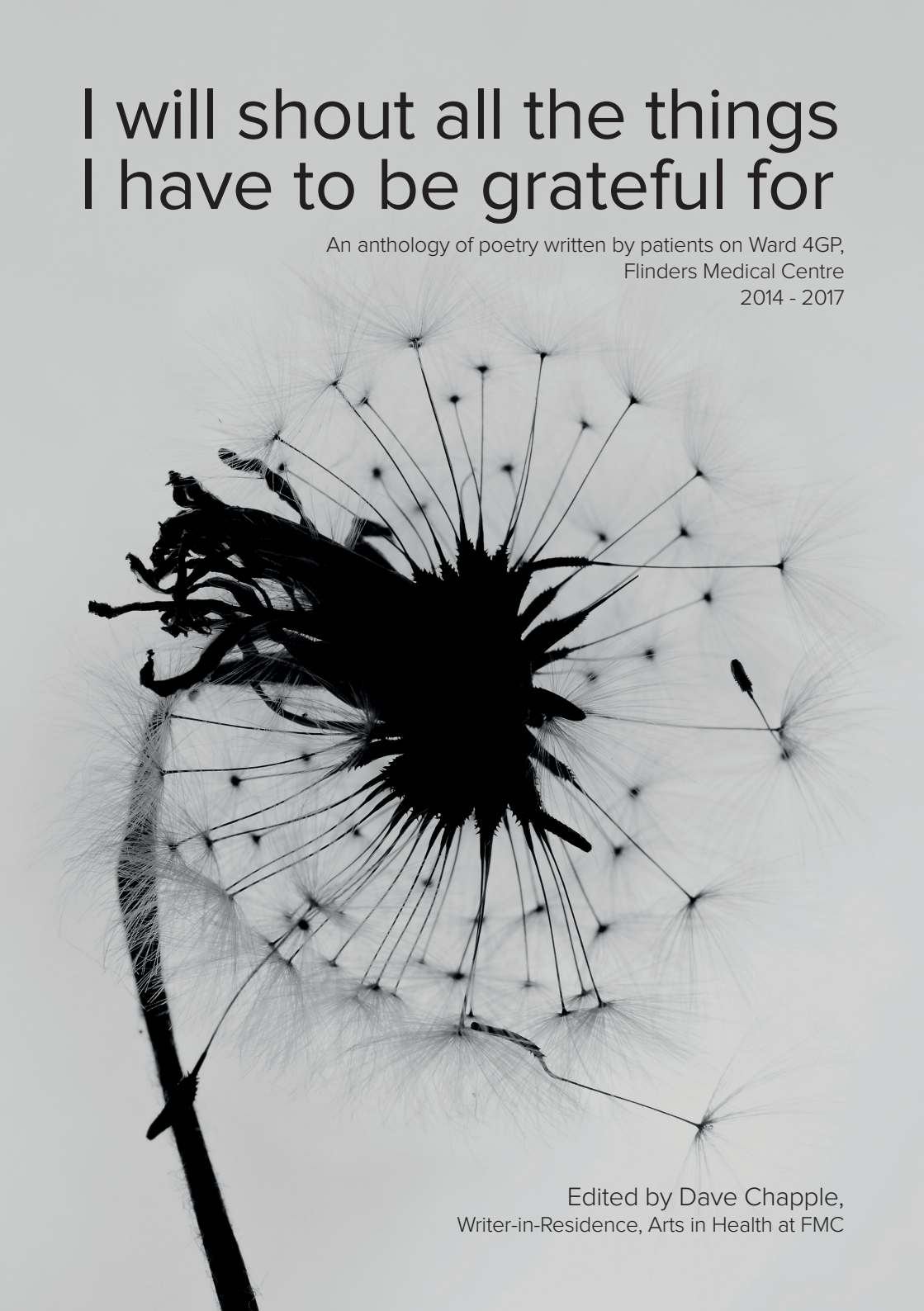



# I will shout all the things I have to be grateful for

An anthology of poetry written by patients on Ward 4GP,  
Flinders Medical Centre  
2014 - 2017



Edited by Dave Chapple,  
Writer-in-Residence, Arts in Health at FMC



We thank all the patients and staff of Ward 4GP, Flinders Medical Centre, for their generous support of this project and their efforts in ensuring this poetry is published with the honour and integrity that it deserves.

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**Health**  
Southern Adelaide  
Local Health Network



# Foreword

Art can heal. History has shown us that art; music and writing have always been essential human expressions, not only in times of joy but also when the mind is troubled.

The process of writing has the power to unlock important processes in the brain which in turn can have profound benefits for the mind and body. This can contribute to healing even the most devastating illness such as an eating disorder.

I am very pleased that our patients have been able to share their therapeutic writing with all of us. I think we can all find important reminders about life, inspiration and hope in these poems.

I would like to thank Arts in Health at Flinders Medical Centre who provide an essential range of creative therapeutic supports to the Statewide Eating Disorder Service.

I would also like to thank and congratulate our patients who, during a time of battling their severe and serious illnesses, have been able to give us the gift of something beautiful in their poems.

**Dr Randall Long** BMBS FRANZCP  
Head of Unit  
Statewide Eating Disorder Service  
South Australia



## (Another) Foreword

I consider myself fortunate to have been involved with the 4GP team for the past five years – a mere drop in the ocean of time compared to some members of the team who have committed their careers to the care and support of individuals with eating disorders. I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge the history of 4GP and each dynamic version of the team in its unwavering compassion towards all patients of 4GP.

As for the patients, past and present... I am in awe of your strength and determination. The resilience you have is humbling and encourages me to be a better nurse – a better person, and for that I thank you all.

It is difficult for many to express their thoughts and feelings, to be vulnerable and reveal themselves for fear of what others may think. Poetry allows us to unmask ourselves, to allow the hidden to flourish and take form. It allows us to communicate with a powerful, unbound sense of freedom that everyday articulation can prevent.

These unique pieces of work express such thoughts, created in a safe and supportive environment, written at times when our patients are often feeling fragile and uncertain.

Enjoy the raw, the funny, the touching and the honest poems contained within this book. They have been composed by fearless warriors.

**Graham Deakin**  
Clinical Services Consultant, Ward 4GP,  
Flinders Medical Centre  
Statewide Eating Disorder Service  
South Australia



## Introduction - Literature in the Hospital

I have been working with the Statewide Eating Disorder Service on Ward 4GP, Flinders Medical Centre, as part of the Arts in Health at FMC program since 2014. I run weekly group writing sessions with the participants. There are usually six patients in residence at any one time and they can be in hospital for two to eight weeks, which gives some continuity to the group.

I recognise all the hard work and dedication of the clinical staff. It appears to me, as a weekly visitor, to be a well-functioning unit where the team have genuine camaraderie, energy and compassion. The participants in the program generally feel very lucky to have the opportunity to receive the support and education offered and I see individuals recover health and positivity over the time they are residents.

In my role to support them, I use a range of facilitation techniques and themes that promote the individual's voice. One reoccurring theme is a comparison between the 'outside and real' world and that of the hospital. Quite often the time in hospital is referred to as an interruption. It seems to me quite a healthy attitude to take to the experience. This interruption to normal life isn't a disaster but a necessary 'time out' before that life can be resumed. During this interruption it would seem that participants want to be involved in meaningful conversation and want to explore, confront and present ideas that have gravity and help them to write rigorous literature.

A walk down a hospital corridor makes you very aware of your footsteps. There are no creaking floorboards or the more ambient sounds of a domestic building. Personal conversations are very hushed and the dominant voice is that of clinical information and procedure. Literature can help to counteract this and help us connect on a very human level.

Literary devices can give the writer more control over what they commit to the page and help them shape, control and manage it. They can also give the writer more control over their thoughts and feelings and offer a safe process to explore difficult ideas. With some very simple structure, really diverse and effective responses are generated and shared within the supportive environment of the group, and participants are guaranteed an appreciative audience.

It's a privilege to work with the residents of the ward. I know that the best literature is brave, honest, challenging and sometimes a little raw. That is definitely the currency of the sessions. We talk a lot; we go off at tangents, laugh, play and write. That time never passes without something meaningful or magical being committed to the page.

**David Chapple**





I will shout all the things I have to be grateful for



# Winter

Interruption

wait for replenishment

ask what will survive

ask what will thrive

rugged up under blue skies

worn well, a flash of red coat.

All these seasons for what they are

tones in a rainbow

and the thing like lightening

in the fire of a thunderstorm.

The thing to make free warm

what we find

in the forest, in the house

on skin, letting light in

new notice of new bloom

outside the room

on one of those sunny slopes.

Admiration

vibrant colours, draw my attention

to an embrace.

# Perpetual Winter

Start real early or not at all because  
I've listened to the rain for days.  
That sound fills everything, plump with comfort  
or even an entertainment.

When I was young  
I would hide under the stairs  
Off to the lowest part of the house  
All fogged with relentless boiling pans

I am  
    wrapped in flannelette sheets  
All rugged up, drawn closer  
Limbs thawed in stale air

There's the breath of someone close  
I do less and there are more people around  
They drop hints with me  
And the rain stops

An earthy odour from wet undergrowth  
Oppressed, condensed under low cloud.  
A distinct must  
All the sad broken branches

Umbrellas blown inside out  
Sombre, not bleak but thoughtful  
In here there are no seasons  
    winter is remembered  
    Remembered and loved.

# Summer

Laughter

Echoes across the valley

Sounds of unknown people

Crawl across blue skies seep through vapour trails

Slow and steady

An adult memory of childhood's season

In the waves

The rhythm of comfort

The gaps in the jetty

Reveals the open water

Reveals me

Now I'm able to wear my bathers

There's always a barbecue

Fish and chips and salt sea water

Or ice blocks all citrus fresh

In the air a fragrance

Could be blossom or it could be danger

Fires demand vigilance

Add the edge to the season

The ground bursts into pink skies

And magpies seek anyplace cool

The road shimmers

It's a mirage a blur of heat waves,  
tan lines, rainbows and mist

It will lead on to desolate dry plains

Or the Lobethal lights  
It's another summer  
And on us all a little rain will fall  
Freedom, frustration and enchantment  
Bare feet and under my clothes  
I'm free  
The water on my skin  
I'm almost floating, buoyant.

## A Group Hug

A definite place  
in the here,  
in the past, and now  
pass by this one room  
freshly ground coffee, pan fried garlic  
aromatic and constant this wood fed stove  
and then I pass by this one room  
smell lush, rose scents  
this house of diffusers and happiness  
candles burn, cinnamon tea  
another room  
caged love birds, madly chirping and yet unnamed  
Dad talks to himself  
he talks business and nonsense  
under the sound of the washing machine  
whirs, hums, warm love hug  
I can't stop moving so I step out  
it's still dark and the moon is there  
the rising sun will blind me and yet I will not move  
like unknowing touches  
and nerves screaming and sombre me, alone  
the ocean, always the ocean  
water rushes over me, rids me of the bad  
sunlight will find its way in  
through the skylight, through the curtains

# Conversation with Natasha

Home is current, Home is now  
And without hesitation I think of  
my family  
A gratitude, describe it without thought

At home  
Too hot to sleep  
I slide off the leather sofa  
Slide to safety, to disinfected floors

And Mum's footsteps  
Up the wooden stairs  
All hollow underneath  
On a floor that requires so  
much effort

I'm in other people's houses  
On good days there's a comfort  
And I'm safe most of the time  
But not all of the time

Based on past experience  
I'm a realist  
I'm a judge of the genuine  
I can take people apart for a  
party trick



And I want  
It all complete  
A better tomorrow  
A man who is driven, all charisma and mind.

But home is now

## More Faith

This is a long journey and a big experience  
Inside still human, still frail  
Small, broken words  
And confidence receded

Still I am that I am.  
Running repairs and faith  
If I'd never had a penny to bless myself  
I will never forget that love experience

We keep coming back to this same space  
Until we have taken on all the lessons  
Until we have revealed that beauty true self  
And discarded petty jealousy.

I am always one day ahead  
I am walking a bridge across the treetops  
I am close to the creator  
And If this structure should fail me  
it will collapse with beauty.

# Home

This disturbance has the potential to last twenty four hours

It's an argument inside and outside this house

A siren

And I have to ask are they coming for me?

When I should be so comfortable

When I should be so safe

It is a hope that I stay here alone  
at night

Some hope

Fat chance

Fifty fat birds weigh down the  
power line

Singing out of season mating call

And next door creates havoc and then offer eggs for an apology

It's a chicken person thing to do

Still it fills me with anxiety.

And so home can exhaust me

Because I spend all the time hiding

From people I don't know

From the people I know

To be normal

The smell of vomit. So horrible  
to admit, so confused with guilt  
and release

I have the best family and my  
family fails

And friends heroic and cowards too  
I had comfort for a memory  
A velvet cat's throat  
A soft bow  
A discerning source of  
unconditional love  
He runs and his stomach swings  
Is this significant?  
The smells of Mum's cooking  
Not comfort  
And sounds of pans too  
They mean the same thing

# Zero

Choices can never be taken hostage  
Every second choosing to stay or go  
The feeling of ambivalence surging  
Through my being  
As it remains undetermined until  
The next  
You take on board other's concerns  
As the pyrrhic reality sets in  
Time seizes and rages while I wait

To get to a point where the choice lacks bias  
Terrifies me like never experienced  
That there is no definitive end point  
I feel empowered in the smallest act of creativity  
Where in that moment I am genuine  
Whether vibrant, dampening through  
Never neutral  
And the time once again belongs to me

# The Surprising Contents of this Christmas Gift

We are in the ward  
Who would have thought,  
never small ideas, words or talk  
And discuss  
Belief  
Him, he and what he represents  
There is so much more to the world  
than science can present  
An adult who believes in Santa  
Who has a sense of magic  
that could make other adults  
believe in Santa  
And now I believe, again  
It's about living  
Love and giving

We talk about the New Year and  
A Brave New World  
Different perspectives  
The range of incentives  
For change  
The lyrics of white Christmas altered to fit the situation  
The tree lights in the dark room  
Silly jokes and paper hats  
But everyone's priorities are different  
they perform in the real-life play

The hive mind and archaic dogma  
Make communication impossible  
So we  
Strive to free ourselves from  
Ideas of perfection  
That fresh feeling  
Of taking on a New Year  
And paying attention  
To me  
We'll see

## Dancing Lilies

I have too much power when it comes to choice  
I make the biggest again and again  
Dawn comes with energy  
Dusk, I see a fog  
But each day I take a step  
I had to; still have to believe the words I tell myself are truths  
Though others doubt my voice  
And now I am still here, erstwhile  
In my own penumbra  
Waiting for the petrichor  
For each storm will pass

Tomorrow brings new dawn, new dusk  
Again I'll look inside for any weary strength  
Take another step  
And I'll turn and look behind me  
Each small step, I crawled  
Or leaped brought me here  
I've come this far, I can go  
This far again  
I'll look at the road  
Ahead and maybe lightening will fuel my next step  
I'll push through the fog  
And learn to dance through  
Tomorrow's rain



# Happiness

Pregnant woman, new husband's hand  
on belly  
early evening,  
She turns around to kiss his cheek  
as the parade marches down the street  
as the vivid ombre night-time  
settles around the present  
every touch is soft and made  
only for them  
She whispers 'I love you.'  
as he kisses her forehead rather  
than unnecessary words  
the sounds of kids playing in the street  
excited by the night-time innocence  
inhaling each breath with rapid excitement  
we are back on the oval before I lost you  
we start in the daylight  
until it finally sets behind us  
before you leave you promise me  
that the world will be ok in the end  
you are my reliability in the absence of other  
and I can't wait until time ticks forward to tomorrow.

# Happiness

Sisters sitting face to face on the grass  
Mid-morning  
One will laugh  
Sunlight brightens everything  
Soft and gentle  
But brilliant, radiance bouncing off  
Her cheeks  
The other is leaning forward  
But leans back and  
Her joy is not hidden  
As it joins the other  
Bird song joins their laughter  
The happiness bubbles through  
Each of them  
And out into the air  
They breathe deeply, quickly  
Between each shout of  
Joy

I am there with my sister on the  
Soft green grass  
The light dances with the breeze  
And rests on our lashes. It paints  
Our hair with gold  
We will travel the world together;  
You are so full of joy  
The light moves across our shoulders  
As we laugh and smile  
And think of the laughs and  
Smiles that will be

# To Doctors

This is your time  
So worry about your humanity  
Be careful to sew words like cool moons  
With assertive confidence

These magazines don't distract me  
But I'm reassured by finger nails, neatly trimmed  
Thought in truth, aesthetic counts for little

It will be within the soft glow of your voice  
To swaddle the cold and heavy and steel and bleach

Ask me how I feel  
And also ask about my holidays  
I am not condition

Watch my eyes, check my pulse  
I am you, in time.

# Earth

The grass under  
bare feet  
smallest parts, reach up  
spearing  
that fresh, grounded feeling  
It's nostalgia this touch  
Gritty, cold and rough  
The muddy creek fat with rain  
Melting through my toes again

And without being too hippy, dippy  
I need to touch to feel  
An animal, a leaf  
The world is then real

And it's warmth, this life  
The heartbeat of how we exist  
That small touch is so intimate  
A tickle, a graze, the lightest kiss

As I rest my head  
On someone's chest  
To hear that machine, pulse, live  
A security at my fingertips.

## Day Shift

And at once

Soft shoes felt like bare feet

High notes called forth crystal

The refracted light

Drenched that day

Ambrosia dreamt comfort

Colludes in white

Knuckled pleasure

And at once

A trail of rain on the window

Cast a varicose vein on your thigh

Support tight security

The dishes piled high

Has the light changed?

And what remains?

# Moment

Crouch down join dirt  
draw a line  
an index finger wide  
grains, grit scurry as inertia dies  
sent high into two ridges along each side  
this is control  
defined

Make it arm's length  
All your anxieties, chaos and calamity  
are held  
You are safe now, you know

Until the wind blows  
The dust falls back in the hollow

# Touch

In this room sunburst hair  
    blue nails, ink  
commitment to think  
ideas, flow, pages turn, we earn  
a sort of connection  
    not idle introspection  
conversation  
sadly, leads to freedom  
this thing  
not lifetime, not season but reason.

Poem about the insubstantial where the title is nearly as long as the actual poem itself and so reading it aloud will always be a strange proposition especially in a room full of concrete thinkers.

Everything is beautiful  
But beauty isn't everything  
He steps  
Off the ledge  
    And nothing  
    But nothing  
    And fresh air  
Under his sole  
And when he should fall  
He floats  
Because although beauty isn't everything  
Everything is beautiful.



# Contract with an unspecified deity

I will

Challenge, change,

accept that nothing stays the same

Of course

I'll breath

Leave the past behind me

I deserve hope,

Health,

the chance to be myself

I can try

Seek objective advice

And occasionally rely

on the shoulder, the hug

Don't judge

Don't speak

Don't try and control me

Be honest

Just care

And be there

.....  
Signed

.....  
Date  
.....

# Poem for Emergency Use Only

I will try  
And in that effort is perfection  
And all pain will pass  
And though we all struggle  
We all rest  
And breathe  
And talk  
And listen  
And love  
And the past will be edited  
And we will retain only beauty and purpose  
And breathe  
And rest  
And talk  
And listen  
And love  
And fail  
And try again  
And fail, better  
And fail, At our best  
And breathe  
And rest  
And talk  
And listen  
And love  
And pause  
Draw the right people close  
And there is the moment, the feeling, the reason.

# Everyday

Ambition

To pursue

and achieve despite.

Despise my challenge and

this interruption

I have clean clothes and clean water to abuse and to ignore

So much of life is consumed. Is consuming

Food to celebrate, food to say love, food to be human.

    Guilt served at twelve noon,

    served with rigor

    served with structure.

    Created from scratch

    I was so removed I had to write a mantra to make breakfast easier

With family at my side. Pets at my side to suckle

I avoid questions become an innocent, become a distraction

I wish to be that good mother. Complete and all and everything.

    A postcard the family sent back from a place of anxiety and pain.

        A place we are motivated to leave to forget about.

Free and normal

I let go of the timid girl within me and tidy the room she once inhabited.

Pack up her compassion, her heart, her kindness.

Prefer to be thought of as resilient.

## Poem that should teach us

Climb up, hide. Hide your frustrations.  
In a forest that belonged to children  
All timid. On the cusp, cusp of breaking  
    Mother taught me to fight  
Taught me to bite and to run  
    Hold on  
    Grip tight  
Grip, tight contracting fist. Fingers around my ribcage.  
Held up in a time of emptiness  
Held up and dropped.  
Expected to fall effortlessly. Slip through the vast horizon become  
pure and raw  
All the pain just a part of it. To help you grow  
To promise so much darkness  
To be plunged  
To be sliding, hiding, on a course but of course off course.  
And in the end you are empty  
And what shines is dissolved  
Tomorrow is a trap  
That is what the dormouse knows

# Broken Hill

I had it and then it went

Left to seed in a sea of red sand. Growing up in a place with a broken name where the weather was never how I wanted it to be.

It sounded like yelling and comfort, all conflict and we turned a blind eye to friends who left and taught loss, everything I wanted and didn't want to see.

Because the family valued independence, instructed in love, hope and other forgotten values.

It is a conflicted life,

like yours,

like mine,

    torn.

If I'm lost today then I begin the search tomorrow

If I wish not me I'm still glad it's not you

If I'm accustomed to disappointment

I know what I should know but I'm finding it hard to really know it

Just hang in

Just hold on tight

Other people deserve it.

# The Real Meaning of Ghosts

The evidence is incomprehensible, impalpable  
Souls in other states, unknowable, improbable  
Though intangible, ethereal not impossible

An abstract form like love or time  
A notion to perform but not possess  
An open heart and open mind  
A universe to experience  
And all is change, energy, light, thought and feelings.  
A stone skimmed across a pond or a pebble rattling between my ribs

The ideas that nobody can measure  
The dogmas people treasure  
The struggle, the fear, the noise  
The battle for equipoise  
And ownership, your body, your person, your existence, your knowledge  
The correct chemistry, equation and a solid punctuality.

Life  
Health  
Love  
Sunflowers  
Water  
Music  
Kindness  
And light

When my voice returns I will shout all the things I'm grateful for  
Rain falls on hot red earth, forgiveness, petrichor

# Ode to Australia

Thongs

Just chucked on

Fireworks split the night sky

As the sparks fly

And sing the Southern Cross onto your bikini

You cared

Were so easy to influence

All your false ease and confidence

As you flip, flop across white sand

Sunnies on head, beer in hand

'No one can love you as much as I do'

That's what you said

I was still hurting

You took a deep breath

'Baby I'm not good for you. I've done bad things. I've have a secret too.'

But your tanned skin shone

As we walked on

One step at a time

And at last you gave me a kiss

I forgot all your sins

Solid job little miss

# Zoom

Vapour trail, a defined line  
And the assumption you leave one behind  
The score of clear intent  
The route by which you went  
The fuel spent  
And the personal certainties you wrote in that combustion

These lines hung to degrade  
Edges blended  
Until that intention is erased  
And everything drawn through that flight  
Insubstantial  
Indistinguishable from the clouds  
You had to pass through

**David Chapple**









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