

Heaven and Hell Are the Same Place

In a 2-week span, late April into early May,
I was shattered to learn, out of the blue, one day
my older sister, just back from a trip, was put into hospice ...
I didn't even know she'd been sick ...

In that same span, I read that a dear friend,
jailed in Japan, was finally free
14 months in a prison cell – out on bail, pending a trial,
for a crime he didn't commit.

Then one morning that week,
I awoke, 4am, from a disquieted sleep
Fearing another friend, had passed
I rose, sent him a text, telling him how much he'd meant.
Words I'd never spoken while he drew breath –

Two days later, I got a reply ...
thanking me ... Oh, what joy ... he was still alive!

With all this as background, that Saturday's task
was to interview the widow of a world-famous artist,
She told me stories of Samuel Beckett, Sam's wife, there many visits together and more ...
Things never written nor spoken, nor known to the world before ...
And I thought – who the hell am I to be honored with such a chore?

By this time's end, there I sat –
stunned ... silenced ... confused ... numbed ...
My own blood dying, friends surviving ...
Intimate stories of a Nobel Laureates' writing ...
So many pages, turned and turning,
in so many separate books of life ...

Why me? Why these? Had I done something wrong? Or ... something right?

I have no answers – Perhaps there's none to be had.
I wasn't then – am not now ... happy ... or hurt ... joyful or sad.

It's just that I can't ignore or explain ... and don't ever now wish to erase
The sense that heaven and hell are simply two different words for the exact same place.

And thus this so-called poem – was born

Footnote: I finished a draft of this piece at 7:38 AM, Thursday, May 9 ... then looked at my phone. At 6:41 I had received a text – at 6:25 my sister had passed. Numbness gave way to grief. She'd been with me all my life. Memories from age 3 to now ... Yes, I'm sad. Tears? Boys aren't supposed to cry.