

# Heavenly

by [Mark J. Mitchell](#) (September 2024)



Sea with Violet Clouds (Emil Nolde, 1936)

## Heavenly

*A Bach fugue has the Crucifixion in it. –György Kurtág*

Some mornings, God sits at an old keyboard  
and plays Bach. Of course, the instrument's  
pretty. Notes fall and fly, ordered, and sent

by angels. Clouds change their color before  
dawn, timed and keyed to the fugue. Every chord's  
sublime as Eve. God plays for God's pleasure,  
immersed in divinity no creature  
could bear hearing. Even angels stop  
their ears, but smile. They like watching notes drop  
so neat. God's perfect and requires measure.

## **Picture Book**

*In memory of Robert Close and Liz Plummer*

A display in a library:  
an open book, no text.

It's a silver print  
showing two large people  
in an empty, pretty alley.

Most who see it  
won't recall their voices,  
know how they would sing.

They're fixed like freaks  
in a cruel museum. Another artist  
took this picture

but left their souls out—  
an act of theft. So, you  
are left to recall the arias

that brightened Maiden Lane  
in San Francisco, Saturdays  
and especially on Sundays.

And you never  
learned their names.

### **Optical Promise**

My glasses slip from my face  
like truant children avoiding algebra.

Light bounces off lenses, up-  
missing the floor, surprising my retina.

My pupil contracts sliding off this page.  
Look but don't see—no lessons here.

Wiping the dust, smearing uncertain oils,  
I put them back on and gaze through a rainbow.

### **Cherub House**

A widow's walk tops the white  
house past that broken church. The height  
lets small angels watch  
the wind. They're not babies, little,  
plump and old, their wings are brittle  
as a plaster cast.

The lower floors stay vacant.  
You look through clear glass  
at empty rooms where no events  
take place. It's all past.

The tiny angels like their view,  
used to looking down from above  
in paintings. They're pink in too blue  
skies. Too close to God.

Time is all playtime, fun for them.  
No prayers to be said.  
They toss light at the moon and send  
kisses to the dead.

## **Confluence**

*Tragedy has exact limits that Hell cannot enclose. –Jack Spicer, Note to The Tragic Muse*

An eighth grade atheist challenges nuns  
but not the way he wants. Still, priests got called.  
Class—all but him—are sent outside to run  
off blasphemy. A rebellion followed,  
with expulsions—not him. It's still a cool  
memory for aging classmates, half-recalled.  
He kept drawing things that weren't allowed—  
comic book cosmologies. Not many  
years later, a blond accomplice shoots pool  
with his misplaced friend, betting on ennui  
to win. She knows who he knows, keeps any  
info close, secret as an undrawn card  
to play later. She shoots well. He falls hard.  
He's her vengeance plaything. He won't go free.

## [Table of Contents](#)

**Mark J. Mitchell** has been a working poet for 50 years. He's the author of five full-length collections, and six chapbooks. His latest collection is *Something To Be* from Pski's Porch Publishing. A novel, *A Book of Lost Songs* is due out in Spring of 2025. He's fond of baseball, Louis Aragon, Dante, and his wife, activist Joan Juster. He lives in San Francisco where he points out pretty things

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