

**So a man walk up to me an 'im say**

That do fearing that he die today

And never had done a good ting in his life

He will give me all the money him has

In his wallet

And it would be a blessing to him

For me to take it

And for me to eat well with it

Or to drink a hot coffee on dis a cold day.

Then he look at me with a serious look

On him face and him say

that I not to use it to buy drugs

Or to buy drink to get me drunk

For a shame meself and by that

Shame him too.

And he tell me that he have done

Nothing good deed in his life

And he has family that he never

Has spoken to in a long time

And that when they did last talk

It was all hot words with them high talk

To each other and it spin out of control

Until now none of dem talk and none of dem remember the subject

But nothing else but the high talk for more

Than five years with no slips.

Water pass under the bridge

Plus he no longer has a name for

Where they all live or even if they live.

And he say to me this happen over nothing

But stupidity and big pride of himself and one another

Of his others.

And then he looks at me all sad and says

For his god to bless me and he hope I keep warm.

I say to im I never have the want of drugs and I don't

Do getting drunk because I sit here and wait

All my time

For enough to eat and nothing more.

So then he makes this kind of unhappy face and says

Sure he believes me and just goes off

Like a smell chase him away quick.

And I look and he has put to me \$10

In my hand

Which I think is a poor likkle amount to carry out

If you think you are thinking you might die

Without a good deed to your name

When the time is up.

**So a man walked up to me to say**, that today might be the last day of his life and he realized that he had never done any really good deeds to speak of, so he had decided that he would give me all the cash in his wallet to try and make up for his lack of charity.

He urged me to take it and to use it to buy something to eat and to get a hot coffee since it was a cold day.

Then with a stern look on his face he said that I was not to use the money to buy drugs or use it to get drunk because to do so would bring shame on me and would bring shame on him too.

He told me again how he never done anything charitable in his life and that he has family that he had not spoken to for many years and that the last time they did speak they argued and shouted at each other until it was completely out of control. Now they do not speak to each other at all even though the cause of the argument is forgotten. It's been five years without anyone backing down. Still, life goes on and besides he does not know where they live or even if they're still alive.

He said the argument was over nothing of consequence and was really about each side being too proud to make the first move.

Then he looked at me more kindly and said "God bless you. I hope you stay warm".

But I told him that I've never taken drugs and I don't drink and all I do is sit and try to collect enough money to eat.

The man frowned at me and said, sarcastically "I believe you" and dashed off as if to avoid a bad smell.

I looked down at my hand where he has placed the money and I see it is a \$10 bill which seems to be a very small gesture if you believed that you might die at any moment without a good deed to your name when your time is up.

## Reincarnation

People say they don't believe in reincarnation  
yet here we are,  
the living embodiments of everybody we ever met,  
many who we haven't,  
all the school dinners we ate  
or discarded,  
homework grades,  
flunks and fails,  
wedgies,  
proms,  
first dates,  
first interviews,  
Friday bus drivers  
who didn't look you in the eye,  
grocery store clerks who  
served you with a desolate sigh,  
the guy who said "three second rule"  
and ate a hairy hamburger.  
People at the zoo,  
people who love zoos,  
people who hate zoos,  
Steve Jobs,  
David Letterman,  
Osama Bin Laden  
and the red-shirted crewman  
who never came back from the away mission  
to the Romulan home planet.  
Don't tell me you're on your own,  
don't tell me you'll leave no mark on the world;  
you're the butterfly who makes the sky quake every single time you flap your  
wings.

You can be the trash that lasts a thousand years,  
you can be the way the world says “cheese” in photographs,  
you can be the reason they have a law against that,  
you can be the one that came before everyone who followed,  
even if they don’t care or notice,  
you can be the reason they don’t pronounce the “p” in pneumatic.  
Be the body under the tree,  
be the candy wrapper in a train tunnel,  
be the weird girl that walks round and round and round and round the park,  
be the way my parrot says “hello” and stares.  
Don’t tell me you’re never going to live forever  
because you’re already there.

I wrote this poem because of this: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom\\_riders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_riders)  
and this: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Zwergs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Zwergs)  
but mainly this: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jimzweg.jpg>

### **Rider**

Rider comes in.

STRIDES in.

Not a swagger.

Not a shoulders back front out puff up bowl down the bus.

A grit of teeth, sure,  
a won't blink look right ahead.

Down the bus.

Down the middle of the wrong bus boy.

The wrong color bus.

And he settles in a seat and grips the bar in front a little too tight.

Riding.

In his neat suit.

A proper suit.

With neat hair,  
a little blond flick

at the regulation length.

And at some stage he says he'll get off first when the bus stops.

And at some stage he wins the half-hearted argument.

So when the bus pulls up,

he's there,

at the door,

and steps into the

swing of a hate-swung baseball bat,

and a motorcycle chain...

and a metal bar...

and a painful dinosaur bone of a table leg

which is studded with nails

that rip into wrong color skin  
that steps off the wrong color bus.

As it swoops  
to mix spittle with blood  
they whoop  
“betrayed your own kind boy”  
even though he can only grunt yelps like a kicked puppy in return.

But they don't see the legendary camera flashes.

They don't see that sodium white  
bouncing boy's jelly-blood dripping face into history:  
the day the buzz-cut white boy  
rode the colored bus.

He said *“I just prayed I'd survive”*.  
*“But why did you do it?”*  
*“Because...because it was the right thing to do”*.

Sometimes when you ride the bus  
you don't ride it for you...  
you ride it for freedom.

## Mims

Added to the list of things from that time:

Saying "hellooooo" down the cave tunnels of an echoing underpass.

Lily of The Valley 'toilet water',

clear like vodka

yet a sweet musk that throws itself up your nose and into a headache.

Earthworms that writhed under the spade and were supposed to become two separate worms

(but apparently die from this lie).

Mothballs. These, which to me existed mostly in my memory, I found just one shelf from an electric tennis racket only yesterday as I dripped from the unexpected rain.

That waxy camphoristic smell.

They fired something up that had been buried in a seven year-old's mind.

Oh, her Saturday fish; rock and 'chips'

(the British kind, mind)

which was an ordinary treat for her and yet I have found none these past three years in tornado alley.

And Toby, her sausage dog,

slip-backed dachshund swine dog

who growled foul-breathed death threats at me  
even as he was scooped into the rolling landscape of her underarm.

Her Jewishness fearfully concealed from nazis and the Black Shirts.  
Even my father cannot remember why he always called her "Mims".  
She shook from the shock treatments of the '50s  
where they made her discordant voices fade into the background.  
Her husband's career as a serial killer bent on her gruesome despatch  
cut short by sleeping jabs and a wild trip  
from fairyland to reality  
with the help of high voltage,  
toe-curling,  
back-thrashing,  
leather-biting electrodes to her crazy bits.

I liked her.

But I especially liked her outside toilet,  
an adventureland full of every possible kind of insect.

Cold enough for polar bears.

And the fact she had an old Anderson air-raid shelter in her landing strip back  
garden.

An air raid shelter, from The Blitz, and German bombers.

And a clock that tocked theatrically and chimed the hours and quarters.

Older than TV.

Oh, but more so than this;

there was an enormous mahogany radio

with an analogue Bakelite dial that listed the names of the stations.

I remember Luxembourg.

It was thrilling.

Then she died, and these shadows are all I have to remember her by.

That,

is why I write poetry.

## **Your cromulent love embiggens me**

I don't know if I told you,  
I love you loads,  
large loads,  
the sort that needs a sign  
and a police escort on narrow roads,  
train loads,  
heavy duty container loads,  
filled with hopes and dreams,  
like a football field  
full of fifteen amateur league teams,  
more than an ant colony loves honey,  
more than a greedy banker loves his money,  
more than wasps love Coca Cola,  
(and that's a lot, especially in Summer),  
oceans of love,  
tons of love,  
A rewritten plot where Bambi's mum comes back from the dead love.  
Like I said, I don't know if I told you.

## **On another hotel room**

There is a such a thrill  
in the danger of hotel rooms.

With pillows unwashed  
from the sins of a previous guest

and sheets prickled with the hairs  
discarded by moments stolen

from another's sweetheart.

How I have kissed the many mouths

that ate with forks tarnished  
by morning breath

and lips that passed thankful  
prayers to gods of passion

and the loneliness that cloys  
to a sales conference cruiser.

I sigh as I step from the  
shower of his self-gratification

and press the scent of a thousand  
lovers into my cheeks

and leave my own to bathe another.

**They shall all come now**, and that is the pity,

Their pity,

To talk turns around It

And how bad it has been found to be

How they are filled with woe and rue

And how long it leaves for

The narrowed foreshortened list

That naïve expectations sketched

And an unplanned plan firmed up

With derogations and compromises.

Will they ever talk of something else?

All our snacks and “good mornings” now shackled

In that gray pity.

How they plan for a misery.

Yes, let’s test. Test and measure and educate a guess

So they can be almost certain of their piteous curtailment,

Of a few Summers less,

Of birthday songs that ring like a lament.

So I can know how long I have left to sing and be happy.

## Threads

This poem scores 5.2 on Poetryassessor.com – Sylvia Plath’s ‘Crossing the water’ scores 2.53. 5.2 is one of the highest scores recorded on there.

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There are dark threads that weave across.

A stroke that arcs a path, a flick that  
hints a stream, shadows pulled from where they  
hid in amongst the streaks,  
or a quiver caught on lonely cheeks,  
a shattered glimpse of a man on the moon:  
all a connection between my thoughts and you.

A silky paper that’s framed with jet,  
flows of ink that dripped from an  
unclenched mind into the right places.  
It’s not where the pen touches – the art is  
how you join the spaces.

So as you lean in and wrinkle your nose  
at the title I chose or the price that gets  
placed on a little bit of me; breathe in  
and smell the scents of the translation; the flower

that unfurled inside a mind's eye, expressed as

“Pen and ink by Nancy Lepo, \$200”.

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Poetry is art, not sport