

THE LINE-UP

Each prisoner is so sad in the glare
I want to be his mother

tell him the white light will go down
and he will sleep soon.

No need to turn under eyes
to shuffle poor soldiers boys

in a play
to wear numbers obey.

They have hands as limp as wet leaves
the long fingers of their lives

hanging. They cannot see
past the sharp edge nor hear me

breathe. O I would tell each one
he will wake small again

in some utterly new place
Trees without bars sun a sweet juice

a green
field full of pardon.

The walls come in. I am
captured like him

locked in this world forever un-
able to say run

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BEDTIME

We are a meadow where the bees hum,
mind and body are almost one

as the fire snaps in the stove
and our eyes close.

and mouth to mouth, the covers
pulled over our shoulders,

we drowse as horses drowse afield,
in accord, though the fall cold

surrounds our warm bed, and though
by day we are singular and often lonely.

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(1977), *Passion* (1980), and *Civil Wars* (1981). She teaches at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

SUNFLOWER SONNET NUMBER ONE

But if I tell you how my heart swings wide
 enough to motivate flirtations with the trees
 or how the happiness of passion freaks inside
 me, will you then believe the faithful, yearning freeze
 on random, fast explosions that I place
 upon my lust? Or must I say the streets are bare
 unless it is your door I face
 unless they are your eyes that, rare
 as tulips on a cold night, trick my mind
 to oranges and yellow flames around a seed
 as deep as anyone may find
 in magic? What do you need?

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I'll give you that, I hope, and more
 But don't you be the one to choose me: poor.

SUNFLOWER SONNET NUMBER TWO

Supposing we could just go on and on as two
 voracious in the days apart as well as when
 we side by side (the many ways we do
 that) well! I would consider then
 perfection possible, or else worthwhile
 to think about. Which is to say
 I guess the costs of long term tend to pile
 up, block and complicate, erase away
 the accidental, temporary, near
 thing/pulsebeat promises one makes
 because the chance, the easy new, is there
 in front of you. But still, perfection takes
 some sacrifice of falling stars for rare.
 And there are stars, but none of you, to spare.

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Donald Justice

A celebrated poet and teacher of poets. Donald Justice was born in 1925 in Miami and educated at the University of Miami, Stanford, and the University of Iowa. He edited The Collected Poems of Weldon Kees (1962). His own books of poems include The Summer Anniversaries (1960), which won the Lamont Prize, Night Light (1967), Departures (1973), and Selected Poems (1979), for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. He is currently on the faculty at the University of Florida.

FIRST DEATH

JUNE 12, 1933

I saw my grandmother grow weak.
 When she died, I kissed her cheek.

I remember the new taste—
 Powder mixed with a drying paste.

Down the hallway, on its table,
 Lay the family's great Bible.

In the dark, by lamplight stirred,
 The Void grew pregnant with the Word.

In black ink they wrote it down.
 The older ink was turning brown.

From the woods there came a cry—
 The hoot owl asking who, not why.

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The men sat silent on the porch.
Each lighted pipe a friendly torch

Against the unknown and the known.
But the child knew himself alone.

JUNE 13, 1933

The morning sun rose up and struck.
Sunflower strove with hollyhock.

I ran the worn path past the sty.
Nothing was hidden from God's eye.

The barn door creaked. I walked among
Chaff and wrinkled cakes of dung.

In the dim light I read the dates
On the dusty license plates

Nailed to the wall as souvenirs.
I breathed the dust in of the years.

I circled the abandoned Ford
Before I tried the running board.

At the wheel I felt the heat
Press upwards through the springless seat.

And when I touched the silent horn,
Small mice scattered through the corn.

JUNE 14, 1933

I remember the soprano
Fanning herself at the piano,

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And the preacher looming large
Above me in his dark blue serge.

My shoes brought in a smell of clay
To mingle with the faint sachet

Of flowers sweating in their vases.
A stranger showed us to our places.

The stiff fan stirred in mother's hand.
Air moved, but only when she fanned.

I wondered how could all her grief
Be squeezed into one small handkerchief.

There was a buzzing on the sill.
It stopped, and everything was still.

We bowed our heads, we closed our eyes
To the mercy of the flies.

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LINKS

My young grandfather, for the me of four
Blew smoke rings. I, these long years more,

Without much gift, can, nonetheless,
Redeem my breath from utter shapelessness.

I have no grandsons, having had no sons.
Still, it is good to know that as he once

Made fire his speech and bridged a clinging void,
However differently employed,

I sometimes smoke a little too,
And might bring off the tricks he used to do.

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Henry Carlile

Henry Carlile was born in San Francisco in 1934 and studied at Gray's Harbor College and the University of Washington. His first book, The Rough-Hewn Table, was the Deems Award winner in 1971. Running Lights, his second book, appeared in 1981. Since 1967 he has taught at Portland State University.

HAVANA BLUES

Tonight I thought of you as I smoked a cigar
Smuggled in from your birthplace by a senator

Who gave it to a friend who gave it to me.
Why speak as though to someone I could see?

HENRY CARLILE · HAYDEN CARRUTH

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I try to know why fathers leave their sons.
Why it is easy to forget—it must be, when

You've never written me to say you're well—
If you're alive—and that you wish me well,

Would like to visit when you have a chance.
Were you too proud or grieved? The evidence

Suggests you were, and so I understand
And must forgive. If you would only send

A card to say Hello again! Your Father.
But I'm talking to myself. Why bother?

You might be dead for all I know or care.
I care, and yet I must confess my fear

Is finding you, not knowing what to say.
I'm talking to myself, a game I play

With words, your face the paper that I press,
Blank father, ghost! And if I miss

You now I miss for both for us. At two,
A small imperfect replica of you.

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