

FRANK LIMA

LYRIC
THE SEA OF COLD
APOLLO E DAFNE BY BERNINI C. 08.01.99
FRIED CATFISH AT CAPTAIN JACK'S
AN ANCIENT POEM
SOMEDAY WITH VENUS
WEST STOCKBRIDGE, MA, U.S.A
"DANTE AND BEATRICE ARE 57 TODAY"
08.09.99
LABIOS CHOCOLATE

LYRIC

“for the boys”

Life is being unalone.
And can be measured
When beloved.
Poetry will stop at
The speed of light,
Without warning, and
The inhabitant will
Simply cease to be a
Slice of life, as in
A wish without a word
Being written. As for me,
A pair of Tiepolo buttocks
Shaped and as white as two
Eggs are the tropical visions
Of March. Like thoughts in
Space hanging out to dry,
The words are clouds melting
The sky. You have enchanted
Me as you did Frank and Joe
And all the others before
There was love and colors.
Are you the mist that played
The drum for Ted and Brodey?
Are you the
Last tulip that fell in
Love with Jimmy?
They inhaled
Your yellow burst
Of words clutching the
Risible dreams you left
Behind.

THE SEA OF COLD

Each year I attend a ceremony. We charter someone's heart who is no longer a poet. It is usually a very clear day. No poems are written on this Day as a tribute to their memory and great poems left to us to emulate

Our morning coffee. It gives us the feeling of being in love for the first time. Yesterday it was easy to fall in love with a stranger, since we were only interested in activity, after the winter fantasies and

Dreams of hot chocolate by a TV that lulled us to sleep with old movies that no one thinks of any more. Now it is the inexorable eloquence of a greater future that we seek without our friends, because we are alone,

Which is synonymous with a splendor and grace that is very old by the standards of America. Our friends have become conversant familiars when we write. They are impatient with our poems that are testaments

To their nerve and departure from the Grand European seduction although the salt air from their poems still revives us when there is nothing to say. We are the wings of the horizon now, and our faults will be

Noted as the new poetry of the English-speaking world. I know this now, but did not believe them when they were with us on the porch of the Cedar Bar buying us a drink or two, so we could write this morning.

APOLLO E DAFNE BY BERNINI C. 08.01.99

For Wally & Vicky

It's those brightly painted toenails that
Remind me of tiny B. Altman Christmas windows.
And hair with its lingering streaks of old men.
And ruby red shrimp lips.
And erotic epigrams after dinner.

But this is not a poem,
Wondering freely in *la Galleria Borghese* supermarket.
Or the dial tone of a dangerous affair.
Or the hiss of silence after coming.
(I can fly after that.)

I love the thought of squirrels pretending
Everything is knowledge and love.
These odds and ends have an inclination to move us,
As enlarged pleasures do.
Like passion, they have their own history,

And hunt by sensing body heat.
Here, meaning is breath and destiny.
This is such a strange occupation,
Being a marble statue, searching for life

In the strabismal milky gaze of the onlooker.
Imagine how glorious life would be if we wished
And became beds in anyone's life,
In any period in history?
Another recent invention is nakedness and human touch.

FRIED CATFISH AT CAPTAIN JACK'S

The summer is almost over although the heatwave will not acquiesce
To such a notion, or the idea of something coming to an impotent end
Until next season when nature grows impatient with bland weather
Prediction against a caliginous blue black round.

I wonder where winter will take you to become heated and brown.
Will you vanish into the sea like a dolphin of mercury to alight on the bottle
With my note that has traveled so far into consciousness to read to you?
Will we ever say let's call it a night and let the tectons that move us

Slowly and deliberately across the great earthly distance bring us closer to our
Destination? Let's fall asleep under a basket of bows for our dreams to
Mend. How will all this affect me?
Make me a better lover to you, will you sleep better and feel refreshed

And willing to face another day of me radiating on the phone?
Don't you realize we are merrily on our way to meet our allotted end?
So why compromise reality with some advance idea of purity?
It has never worked, only in holy books that are always in reprint for the

Doubters of joy. Nevertheless, in that thin crack in the milky sky there is
Enough room for both of us and your clients, whether they speak English
Or not, since they are paying for your efforts and compliance with
Their misery. Today I found a rose that looked like you on the beach,

Wearing a jalapeno thong. I took that rose to the opera
To free it from earthly sentience.
My operatic rose will never frighten birds away with her glass voice.
Will I be anything more than a pebble on one of your works along the
Seashore? Remember I was the note in the bottle for which you wished.

AN ANCIENT POEM

for Jackie Sheeler

Holy is this moment in the subway.

Holy is the moment I awake clear but not rested with second-rate sleep
And historical mistakes that recall when they were my proud cavalcades
On display. I am not alone, sleep with names and sheets of paper and

Photos of my friends of the mountains. They have memories of me as a
Sinless child to the acts of mothers and fathers.

I am the last hitman left in the stars,
The encore of a marble migraine, the daily cologne of the lie

As celibate as a seashell that did not hang around to be picked for the
Easter soup. What will become of me without a plural in this fatherless
Sleep that feeds some duplicating machine at the gate of a flower that
Once lived in heaven? We were created in the name of art when it was

The color of a newborn child, when the rain was clear and knew where it
Was going into a hole in the heart of a god that recognized the smallest
Efforts. To live on olive oil, espresso and sonnets as thin as wafers
Because that was all that was needed instead of death or thanks for

Publishing my work or showing my rotten heart at the gallery.
Nevertheless, I see the pages of the city blow away into the memory of a
Plague. The angels have new skin and are updating pain for me with the
Long hair left in the bed of errors in some antique transcription of

A young woman enjoying the last few seconds of a Sapphic kiss,
Saying "join me so we can fold each other into the spring,
Into those things poets like to write about, like new poems in the forest,
Small, shiny, twisted with shame."

SOMEDAY WITH VENUS

Eventually we will all be punished for longing while on a leash.
Dying young, addicted to airports and businessmen who think they are
Inmates, and want to assume their place in the sun with common
Madness in the controlling act of catching your breath, in order not to

Breathe again, is the ultimate terror of love. On that day of success, the
Great clocks of the world will lie to each other: So we can be adopted by
The hedonist who looks like a curious, pregnant straightjacket looking for
A child to be born into this world, both gorgeous and gloomy when we

Become as dry as history is to memory. Here, on the eve of the first
Accident, on the day of portent design all the nouns and verbs of creation
Came into being, and spring became forbidden and green.
I love you as much as I love all the stages of ancient unions that said we

Could never part with the technical language spilling over into shame
Burning brightly into the morning. I will learn to speak the grammar of
Forgiveness as a hearse crosses my heart like bucket of slander
Accumulating something much more loathsome than carnivorous regret.

WEST STOCKBRIDGE, MA, U.S.A

(for Michael & Barbiero Gizzi)

Stay on the Taconic Parkway
Until it spreads like a tall hat
When you come to route 102
You'll reach route 41
And hang a right on B3
Where the sky bends slightly
To the left
You'll see the flaky clouds
Leading to Old Stockbridge
With its Lenox China moon

When we get there
We read the historic bricks
Laid by Italian hands
Hands that were made by
Michael Gizzi
And his trusting ancestors
Searching for order in the
Granite cantatas and maple syrup
Of the Berkshires

We will be there to meet
Jon and Ann
And exchange real estate
On flying napkins
That blow country air into our
Damp poetic rooms

My left ear is still ringing
With Chad Odefey's new poem
I'll bet Neruda is whispering his name
Chad told me that before he left his native Colorado
He prayed for an Irish meteor shower

Instead he found Kate Naples
Who is made of pink salmon flesh
Mustard and honey

Susan finally materializes
Wearing a loose black apparition
Studded with morning stars
That gently cover wonderful things
She cannot hide
She's holding a shivering Peruvian Barbie Doll
(her daughter Lily)
Susan is really a Buddhist
Who writes poetry and fairy tales to live by
Norman Bluhm arrives at 90 mph
With his imaginary Gauloise hanging on his lower lip (it's
the last Olympic cigarette of the Cedar Bar: there
Is no one left to pass it onto)
With the ghost of Frank O'Hara
Under his arm in a dusty bottle
Of Haut-Medoc
Grand Vin De Chateau Cheval Blanc St.-Emillion
Premier Grand Cru Classe
Mis en bouteilles chataeau rouge

Is this expensive wine?
Does the rouge at the end mean
It will taste like lipstick?

Jon leads us to the infirmary of
Lingo Magazine
And serves us *Explorateur* and *Brie*
On triple-crème Cds

Jon brings me up to date on
David Shapiro's last telephone message
Which lasted less than 60 minutes
Before the machine started foaming
At the mouth and coughing blood

David is the wizard of poetry
His poems contain no chemicals
Unlike the dog-eat-dog poets
Who imitate Kenneth Koch's
Early morning Stradivarius style
(I wrote this poem this morning
After swimming across my cup of coffee
And created my son *Machu Picchu*
In the image of David and Kenneth)
We meet a lemon curd
English composer
And his awkward
Queen Mary girlfriend
With British white teeth
Who wears a leash
With her 19th century music thesis
Attached to it and sure enough
Norman trips over it
And she becomes another deceased
In his art nouvelle *repertorium*
Of Paris in 1947
Before blintzes and white wine
Were fashionable

We have two kinds of pies—
Mosquito and plum
Berries and spiders
With a rare Pellegrino lemonade
That only Jon and Ann can import

I don't want to die on Jon's lap
And add another fugue
To his life of extra cheese

Among us flowing in her own black sea
Is the spirit of Africa
Concealed in the body of
Barbieo Gizzi

How lucky Michael is
To awake each morning
Being greeted by the warm flowing
Islands of Cape Verde against his face
She is the poem in Sedar Senghor's dream
When he slept on the island of Brava

After a casual dinner of
Jicama basil and lasagna
Michael informs me that
Jimmy Schuyler
No longer spends his summer in
New England "Freely Espousing"
And has left a copy of his
"Hymn to Life" on the small night table in
The sculpture garden
And that John Ashbery has
Taken his "Double Dream of Spring"
Back to New York.

“DANTE AND BEATRICE ARE 57 TODAY”

after David Shapiro

I

“Dante and Beatrice are 57 today.”
They live in Paradise with the fallen
Angels, the demons that absconded with

Their biblical crimes from the inferno
On the outskirts of Virgil’s flesh.
Beatrice always wears black and white
Gowns of tenderness. Dante is
Terrifying, old and crumbles as he
Watches Beatrice twirl and trample

II

The clouds on their way to heaven.
This is paradise. Where every
Instant Dante writes an erotic

terza rima for the assembly of God.
God created the cymbal to keep Dante
Awake. Beatrice slaps on her

Stomach exhaling spring butterflies
From her white rolling shoulders,
As she breathes deeply the warm

III

Pursuing air. She weeps on stones and
They grow wings. She loves her crazy
Uncle: A nimble carpenter who uses
Tide boxes to construct large
Cathedrals. This is Paradise.

Everyone is old here and plays the
Violin. Is David Shapiro related to
Dante? Beatrice seems to think so
Since her ancestors were Roman bee

IV

Keepers. She, like rice, goes to the
Mountains to eat snow and white
Truffles for the care of her ermine

Skin. Dante watches her and his
Leg catches fire. He is inspired
To write a long poem about Paradise

And Hell. About Ohm's law. About
Thermal energy. He names the poem,
"Straight Out of You."

V

The Pope objects to the title, saying,
"This sounds too *comedia vulgari*.
Not *divino*, at all." Beatrice is the

Last oncogene in Dante's life that
Traces her naked body in the sand,
Like the stars swelling through pain.

She falls into his receding arms,
As light as a child's kiss. He asks,
"O bitter steel conscience,

VI

Is this the basement of hell?"
"Am I the starless elevator to hell?"

“Am I the scarless stairs to heaven?”
“Am I your breed to live on breasts?”
But God is too busy preparing wars
For the living and wars for the dead:

“Humans are high octane: some have
To be saved, some have to burn in hell.”
The red lips of Beatrice,

VII
Leak out of Dante, like an old fountain
Pen wobbling across someone’s last well
And testament into the night.

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A handsome stranger picks up a long distance dial tone.
It reminds him of beach sand when he was a kid.

It was history and he was just a syllable
In his father's voice, and like an eraser of

Architecture death was an older son.
A beginner and a lender of life,
A road of faces and potholes waited
For the next event to arrive with you in hand.

And all the while the moment
Was covered with the present.

LABIOS CHOCOLATE

the poem

writing is a button
I wear with your name
on it

I remember the wind
carving your face
into a moment

the wind pouring
my heart into a
glass you had put down

dripping with
your chocolate lips
and touch
and shape

do you think of me
as a street that goes
on forever

a street that will
take all my friends
to heaven to see

their indifferent
poems become air
and art

we die a little
when you look at it
because it desires

to live for the process
and in the end all
it has is the end