

Six Poems

Greg Keeler

A One-Quart Zip-Lock™

I packed carefully, loosening the strings
on my guitar as required for high altitudes and
placing small amounts of liquids and pastes—
deodorant, hair gel, Anusol™, toothpaste, nasal
inhalant, sun block, skin lotion, etc., in a
Zip-Lock™ bag, which I would place in a pouch
of my carry-on suitcase after I had gone through
the security check. Before I arrived
at the security check, I took off my
shoes, belt, glasses, jacket and watch so that I
wouldn't hinder the other passengers, and I carried
the Zip-Lock™ bag and my boarding pass in my
teeth to facilitate a smooth inspection.
As I placed my belt, jacket, watch, shoes,
glasses and briefcase in a plastic tray to be
x-rayed, a security worker saw the Zip-Lock™
bag in my teeth. "This bag is too large," he said.
"It's at least one half of a gallon," he said.
"It should be a quart bag," he said.
While I waited for my shoes, belt, watch,
jacket, and glasses he stared at my Zip-Lock™ and its contents.

You might be able to purchase a smaller Zip-Lock™ bag at the gift shop, though you would still have to throw away several of your small containers of liquid,” he said. “I probably don’t have time to run through the airport with no shoes and my pants at my knees,” I said. “So why don’t you put my large Zip-Lock™ and its contents in the trash, except perhaps for the Anusol™, which I encourage you to keep for your own purposes,” I said.

Intimations of Immortality

I went to the poetry workshop because I had received a flyer that said it would cost one hundred and fifty dollars to eat breakfasts, lunches, and dinners for three days and attend lectures by famous poets. After I had driven from Natchitoches, Louisiana to Boulder, Colorado to attend the workshop, a woman with long blond hair who was wearing a dress that looked like it came from India told me that there was a mistake on the flyer and that the price should be one thousand five hundred dollars and not one hundred and fifty dollars. When I told her how far I had driven to enroll in the workshop, she told me to talk to a man in a suit who was standing nearby. The man in the suit worked for the Prudential Insurance Company. The Prudential Insurance Company was financially responsible for the poetry workshop.

The man in the suit told me that the Prudential Insurance Company was very sorry about the error and that they would allow me to attend if I paid them one thousand dollars more. So I paid them one thousand dollars more. At the first lecture that I attended, a famous poet read to a large audience from the sample of my poetry that the flyer had requested. He said that the poetry was written by someone who was trying to have a voice but didn't. Then he quoted the last lines of William Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality" and said that Alfred Lord Tennyson had written them.

Whole Hog

So when we stop at the Co-op for a couple of Old Milwaukee tall-boys, the girl says Pabst pints are just a buck, so I say sure, we're sold, and she says where you headed, and that reminds me we've got sixty miles to go, so I say better make it six of 'em—that's three apiece, one for every twenty miles. Why don't we go whole hog and you and me get us a couple of Frito Big Grabs, you say as she sacks up the pints. You'll get more for less, she says, if you buy a whole bag, and hey, you get two for the price of one. Well, sure you say, you better throw in a couple of those, but no more deals or I might have to propose.

About the Money

I'm happy that you enjoyed the song/poem/
books/loan, so I was wondering about,
well, the money. I know these things work out
in time, you have plenty on your mind, Rome
wasn't built in a day, and you're probably prone
to brief lapses in memory, and I don't doubt
your integrity, but I was wondering, well, about
the money. I know where you work and I know where your home
is, and this isn't to threaten or even cajole,
but the money, I was thinking, perhaps or maybe.
I know you're a deep, caring sensitive soul;
the bath water's the debt and you are the baby,
so I wouldn't dream of pulling anything funny,
but I was wondering, er, uh, about the money.

A Loose Interpretation

Today students, we'll be discussing how Zeus
fiddled while Athens burned. This was the fated
result of Hamlet finding himself mated
with his mother after killing his father whose
donkey solved riddles in Thebes. In a loose
interpretation, he blinds his noble but hated
sheep, which he stakes on a hillside in a belated
attempt at appeasing Polonius. But, as a ruse,
a big swan comes down and ravishes the sheep,

and her offspring go off to found Rome
after a pig suckles them and they sleep
for a hundred years. When they get home
their father kills a fatted carp. That's why
we'll never know where we go when we die.

Mercury

Husb-a-bye

These fish that surround me like icons
on the blue battlements,
they are a risk I have never been willing to take.
Gorgeous feathers all look alike to the Jamaican girl there,
carrying a list from her auntie
into a northern climate.

don't you cry.

One orchid
one jar of Katydid
one broken mirror
two limes
one skull
six periods
two large spiders (male and female).

Go to sleep you little baby.

As a child, I carried fillings of mercury around inside of my head.
Mother would call and call, but I could only hear the train in my ears,
moving down its tunnel of blood toward the dark heart
my father gave me in his pain.

When you wake

I'll never get used to my orbital lenses where only the center is clear
and everything else falls away.
In the dream my girl was eating chocolates—
no, she was eating the cooked hearts of chickens
one after another.

you will see

The musak beside this escalator is playing a tune the Irish learned from whales
before the great slaughter.
Are these your lamps, O poets, fueled by blubber and blood?

After the priest had finished with her, she went into the garden behind the rectory
and filled her mouth with red clay.

All the pretty little ponies.