

ANOTHER POOR EXCUSE FOR BEING LATE TO WORK

GENE PARÉ

I woke up hundreds of years from now,
stood outside in the acid rain and screamed.
I tossed a kickstand at a monorail and missed.
I trampled through a moonscape of plastic cacti
and found an artificial leg
in an abandoned phone booth.

I soared weightless in the metallic air,
noticing a crack in the sky's black Tupperware lid.
I laughed at my reflection in a chromium wall
engraved with the names
of two reputedly honest presidents;
I didn't recognize either of them.

I stared back at some rotund creatures staring at me,
unzipped my limp flag and waved it as a gesture of peace.
I asked them who they were, no response,
asked them to loan me a few bucks, no response,
asked if they like it from the rear,
several of them made a high-pitched noise.

I bet one of them it couldn't touch its toes.
I struck a match to get a better look;
it touched all fifty of them.
A smoke alarm went off somewhere,
and the creatures disappeared like pool balls
into fallout shelters.

My ears began to ring.
An orange shuttle hovered overhead
and caught me in an ultraviolet strobe.
I gyrated for a moment, then passed out.
When I woke again,
it was Monday morning.

MAN WITH LEAFBLOWER

GENE PARÉ

He stands still for a moment,
assessing the lay of the leaves in the yard,
then yanks the cord---veins jump
in his brown forearms.
He leans forward,
twists his trunk side to side
and strides across the lawn in ear muffs
with all the confidence of Aeolus,
wielding the unruly contraption
as if playing the bagpipes.

A warm jet of air lifts and upends the leaves,
stirs and scatters them into new piles
to be blown into the street
where passing cars
or even the faintest of winds
whisk them along like missed notes
into some unknown neighbor's yard.

KEVIN MILLER



BARB

GENE PARÉ

Barb's a stripper at AJ's now.
Two breast enlargements ago,
we worked together at an electronics firm
over in Sunnyvale.
She looked just fine back then.
I dropped by AJ's the other night
and got an eyeful,
gave up my five bucks
to have her turn around and bend over
a few inches from my nose.

I had never thought of Barb
like that before.
Well, yes I had.
But not so vividly.
It's amazing, the distance
a couple of years can put
between friends.