

Why Me?

WHY ME?

**a poetry collection by
Seymour Shubin**

Wait Your Turn

Where j'all go?

It's not my language, that, but it just came out.

It needs a bigger language than my own.

So many gone.

All, in fact.

The whole gang.

All the guys, and more.

Tell me, where j'all go?

And why not me?

Shh, shh.

Just wait your turn.

Half-Ball

We played what we used to call half-ball
which involves cutting a regular pimple ball in half
so you couldn't hit it too far on
a city street
or driveway,
just far enough so you could get a hit
or even a home run.

He was a gentle boy, this boy,
about two years older than the rest of us,
maybe three.
Well, he played this one game in the driveway
so full of life,
and then a neighbor came to our door the next day
with word that he'd died
and no one knew why, not even the doctors,
he just went to bed and died.
This kid with the same first name as mine,
which made it even worse,
but not as bad as when we'd drive past the cemetery
on our frequent trips to New York
to visit my eldest sister and her family,
and as we drove by I would think of him in there
with all those ghostly old people.

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Then a couple of years later
they built a highway
that by-passed the cemetery.
I was glad at first
until I realized
how much more lonely he might be.

Perhaps Me

The vet said, “Are you sure?”
and Glo said yes.

But I was looking at the old girl
walking around our feet,
unknowing,
and I said let’s take her home again
and see.

But Glo said it’s too much of a mess.
Kind Glo who had brought Lady home
many years ago and loved her.

So we lifted the poor thing up
to the table
and she lay there, tail slapping.
And I watched the needle go in
and the poor thing’s movements
stopped almost immediately.

And all I could think of was:
Why not for human suffering?
Why not for me some day?

Cod Liver Oil

When I was a kid
I used to get a nickel to drink
a tablespoon of cod liver oil
which was the most
poisonous tasting concoction
I could think of.
But a nickel was a nickel
and if you held your breath
you could get it down.

Cod liver oil was supposed
to do you great
though I was still getting occasional colds
or what they called
“Grip”
which would put you to bed for a week.

Soon my wealth was growing,
in fact the bank gave my father,
to give to me,
a small bank
where I’d put the nickels
until my father gave the coins to them.

But then one day my father

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came home and announced
that the bank was one of many banks
that had “failed”
in the Depression
we were living in.
And my money was gone,
along with a lot of other people’s money.

I never drank cod liver oil
after that.

About Lying

My mother used to say it
when I was growing up
but I never really understood it
until I was, say,
about thirteen or so.
And what she used to say was
“I hate liars,
a liar and a thief are the same.”

It sounded good
though I didn't really understand it
for years,
that a liar and a thief are the same
because they both
steal
something from you.

How true, and I try to live it,
even though it puts me
at a great disadvantage.

--- END OF SAMPLE ---

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