

*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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