

Who Do I Know?

Andrew Towers

I open my address book.
Immediately, bar coasters and business cards spill out.
Desperately scrawled names,
recently acquired phone numbers:
of people I already can't remember,
of people I'd like to get to know,
of people I wish I'd never met.

On some pages, just a name and phone number.
No address, no way to truly correspond.
No letters, no Christmas cards, no postcards.
Just a casual interest in somebody
I want something out of –
a reliable pot dealer,
a witty dinner guest,
a pulse on the party circuit.

Then there are names with old addresses,
no zip codes.
Calls can't even be made.
Letters would take a long time to reach these people.
Life, surprisingly, goes on without these people,
who always manage to reach me:
creepy cousins who pray for my soul,
a sister I can't quite forgive,
the dead I no longer talk with.
People I should make an effort to know,
but appear to be too much work
for the Postmaster and Directory Assistance.

But if I really knew you,
I'd have your damn zip code in my address book.
I'd have your work number,
and the number to your parents.
I'd put a slash by your name
and add the name of the person you now love.
Get the Polish spelling right.
Keep you in my book
long after the friendship has ended.
I'd document your whereabouts from college to Alaska,
from apartment to house,
from apartment to apartment to apartment.

My address book would creep with ink
that spells your name and place,
constant number changes,
your life's rearrangements.
All the alternate ways
I've been hard pressed, depressed,
and blessed to reach you.
I would want your whereabouts to take up an entire page.