

THE WRITER AT HOME

Sitting here at my desk trying
to write feeling low down Poems
keep coming back in the mail can't
think how to finish the story I'm
writing got three other stories and a
dozen poems still out there for
weeks now on strangers' desks When
here comes Blythe holds out
an envelope "To Dad" scrawled in
crayon I open it up and Christ
it's full of colored hearts and crazy
rainbows I see she's been working too
So I get the tape and we put
them all up on walls corkboard
printer computer file drawers After
we're done I tell her I'll write
a poem about this and give it to
her She says "No thanks Dad" Well o.k.
I'm used to that attitude but at least
now I have colors around me again.

THE KID BELIEVES IN MANAGEMENT

he hasn't spent time with the big boys
never been to a company party seen the
top man expansive surrounded by VPs never
noticed that outer circle the young execs
hustlers suck-ups hovering seeking eye contact
pretending they like it never checked out
the old strivers earnest aging wondering
have they peaked and all those company
wives well-coached always knowing
who to flatter flirt with snub yeah
the kid believes and maybe
someday he'll astonish us all
make himself successful
or something

EARL RECONSIDERS HIS VIEWS ON ISRAEL

Had this girl in Starkville, green-eyed
blonde, my first one, only one, face like an
angel and an ass to match. We were doin' just
fine until this rag-head kinda A-rab
boy from the college, had a loaded
Chevy van? he started sniffin' around on the
sly, said he'd treat her like a

desert queen or some-such crap, and after
that I never got a word in edge-ways.
I don't know why I never hit him.

I saw that boy a week ago downtown,
talkin' to some other kinda A-rab
lookin' guys, talkin' English like
they didn't care who heard 'em. He
was tellin' all his buddies about
some girl he knew, said she
let him "fock her in the ozz," and
I've been wonderin' ever since.

BE BRAVE

You have to because we all know it isn't easy huh?
Writing this stuff and sending it out god knows when
you'll see it again Sending it to people who if you
knew them you might not even give the time of day But
here you're giving them a piece of your soul Waiting
for their decision like a little kid in trouble

And the postman — god! Ever think of him? Probably
wonders what the hell he's got here Maybe he thinks
you're some kind of revolutionary You hope you are
Maybe he thinks you're queer or something Well maybe
you are in one way or another so what? Maybe he
doesn't even look at the mail you send Doesn't know
or care what you do

But then maybe he pays some
attention thinks writers are smart Maybe he's got
some things of his own he wishes he knew how to
explain on paper Like the woman who came to the door
naked Or the time he maced that pit bull blind but
it kept on coming tried to chew a tire off his jeep
Or the time he gave CPR to the old gripe-ass
who never tipped on Christmas etc etc etc

But I'm way out of line here All I really mean to say
is keep sending it out Probably best not to care about
the postman Just be brave because somebody's got to and
if it was easy everybody would be doing it Postmen
would be poets and all the poets would just be
sending poems and reviews to each other
Which come to think of it is pretty much how it is now
anyway

— Michael R. Battram

Evansville IN