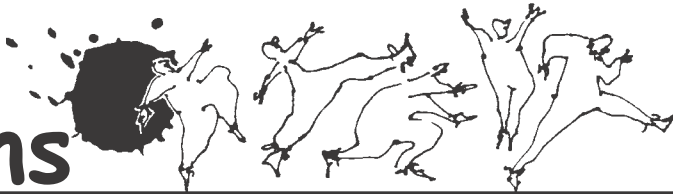


# Deanotations

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Dear Reader,

Last week in the post office a woman said “sorry” to her tiny towed tow-head daughter and all along the winding line to the counter, people smiled.

When you drag a child into the post office, most bystanders watch idly, enjoying the child’s energy, while the mother notices only unwanted irksome motion. In this case, Mom reached through the line just in front of me to get at a shelf with padded envelopes, small, medium and large, stacked one behind the other in separate lucite stands. The daughter, perhaps 3, toddled up to help, reached into the nearest stand and pulled out a small envelope.

Mother, in a hurry, tugged on daughter (“C’mon!”), noticed she had an envelope, snatched it from her, and dropped it in the stand with the medium-sized envelopes. As Mom turned away, daughter reached back to pick up the envelope, trying to put it where it belonged, among the small envelopes. I saw this, the guy next to me saw this, all down the line I sensed people noticing that an injustice was about to occur, each thinking, should I meddle? Should I say something? Is this kid about to be swatted.

And, indeed, Mom turned back, irritated, yanked her daughter’s arm, then — she SAW! (somehow saw that her daughter had simply been putting the envelope in the right place). I don’t know how, in her hectic mood, she’d seen this; I felt as if the combined telepathic power of the people in line who’d been silently shouting “WAIT!” had reached her. She said, “LET’S GO! Oh [seeing why her daughter had delayed], sorry. C’mon now.” And pulled her daughter after her.

Nothing more, no big realization, still a rushed Mom dragging daughter behind. But smiles broke out up and down the line like the first crocuses of spring peeping up through the snow.

I’m not sure how to make a poem of this. When even a poet says “you had to be there,” probably you had to be there.

People manage to do terrible things to each other, but, to paraphrase myself, “It’s even sadder than you think: they are ALL good people.”

I’ve decided to end “Deanotations” after one or two more issues, finding something else (one or more of my books, back issues they don’t have) to send people still owed issues. So I won’t send out renewal letters. One of the remaining issues will be a big one. (I’ll continue to add poems to [www.blehert.com](http://www.blehert.com).) Stay tuned.

*Yours tearily,  
Dean Blehert*



“Come to bed!” “Just a sec” —  
spotting one more beard hair  
sticking out...

I’ve been away from home. LOOK at them!  
All those e-mail messages, frozen hellos  
that only I can thaw.

Old dog sniffs...WHAT?  
Leaps downhill like a puppy...  
I carry him back up.

A thousand eyes, yet  
couldn’t see spider threads! I,  
what can’t I see?

Through the leaves,  
pieces of sky, infinitely tattered.

The wind buffets  
leafy branches, rearranging sky lace.

## Boredom

Nap time. Shades drawn,  
the boy stares at a thin beam  
of dust motes drifting.

Nap time. Bicycle  
noises, kids laughing, a shout —  
missing everything.

Peas invade mashed  
potatoes, now retreat, one  
by one. Cold gravy.

## Small Disappointments

One of our baby sitters — Mrs. Sweet? or maybe Mrs. Pfeiffer — Mom always said “Oh, Mrs. Pfeiffer’s wonderful!” I don’t know why, but I was little; I just remember her playing Solitaire. Mom also said that Mrs. Annin spoiled her for other cleaning ladies: Mrs. Annin, whom I used to confuse (similar names) with another good cleaning lady (“the only good one since Mrs. Annin died”), Anna (like Annin) Smith, dark-skinned, old, but not ancient like Mrs. Annin, who was in her 80’s, tiny, as crisp as ironed lace. With later help, Mom, just home, would reach into a window ledge or a crevice in mantel molding, show me her finger tipped with gray smut and say, “Mrs. Annin wouldn’t have missed that!”



Well, one of our baby sitters used to turn our lunch plates into happy faces, neat piles of peas for eyes, raisin-eyebrows, tuna salad nose and cantalope-slice smile, for example. It was a face, you ate it, that was it, the usual disappointment: As a kid I took everything as the promise of something else, something more exciting than banana slices in red cubes of Jell-O. Adults whom adults find “wonderful with kids” are wonderful with adults. Most kids are appreciative because most kids are more polite than most adults realize.

I recall the fact of those faces, but can’t visualize them, only Mom’s drawn face, too sharp for its freckles (only happy rosy children had freckles in our picture books). She was still trying to make a go of teaching. She hadn’t yet had all seven of us, just two or three. Also I remember the bicycles on the backs of someone’s pack of cards (Mrs. Pfeiffer’s?) and how colorful kings, queens and jacks, intriguing at first, soon became just playing cards.

And what of me do I recall? All of the above is of me. But was I happy? What right have I to answer for that child? If you’d asked him then, he’d have said yes or no, depending on whether his snail-sun had just moved in or out of his clouds, which happened every few minutes (I was too old already for a baby’s second to second) — and that is a kind of happiness, though nothing like a shiny pink-gold smiling slice of cantalope.

## To [Your Name Here]

I begin to forget names and words. They come back hours or days later like lost pets. But sometimes pets do not come back. Oddly, that analogy doesn’t bother me — because what I forget is always right there, a familiar face I cannot name, but love; because it is refreshing to go naked of words — even naked of just this one word, as a stripteaser’s dropped scarf or glove promises all the rest; because I am what I am, and that is not a memory; because I can create new words as fast as I can forget the old ones; because I do not believe in forgetting, only the deterioration of circuitry upon which we have excessively relied, these “forgettings” the momentary confusion as I learn to do it myself; because doing without the old circuits is good practice for when I will have only myself; because what I can know, I don’t need to remember, and I can know whatever I can be, and names are barriers to being; because I remember remembering; because I remember knowing; because I know you.

Today on the radio I hear people expound on the Joys of Prozac, the joy, for example, of not caring about other people’s feelings, the joy of being locked in the inching edge of an emotional glacier. They sound so happy about it: Invasion of the Body Snatchers, pod people, wearing the bodies of loved ones, telling the hold-outs, now don’t resist, go to sleep, you’ll love it, really! Do people look at me as suspiciously, when I tout the joys of freedom? Scared humans are nearly as cute as the mice who scurble at the vents on the trap, rather than notice I’ve opened the top, and they are free to go.

Psychoanalysis: Aberration elaboration.



## You

The pillow puffs out cheek, lips, hair —  
unruly you,  
unruly, you.

A slammed door...protest? Do I dare?  
You flail at me in brief despair,  
unduly you,  
unduly, you.

Ensnoced with book on bathroom chair —  
“Up! Up! It’s late! Get out of there!”  
So cruelly you,  
Ah, cruelly, you.

Free-spirited artist, yet a square  
(Because you glow, you fight, you care).  
Uncoolly you.  
Uncoolly, you.

A grin above me like a flare,  
Eyes fierce as falcons...soft as air,  
Good things to fondle everywhere,  
Angelic now, a smile so rare  
I learn new words: “lambent” and “yare”...  
A gleam...a tickle?! — oops! Beware!  
Caress turns traitor! Imp! Unfair!  
Friend, foe, my love, as various bare  
As in the other things you wear —  
It’s truly you,  
All newly you.

We’re fatter now. You snore. We share  
A dread of drooling — what use prayer?  
If drool we must, soil underwear,  
I won’t regret one stain, I swear!  
Who rides this train must pay the fare —  
And won’t we be a feisty pair!  
Undroolly you,  
Ah, droolly you!



Incoming wave —  
spinning a billion threads  
of sun-gold on its wheel.

Moonlit beach.  
Ribbons of light ride black waves  
to shore.



You wonder, if, one night, you failed to come home  
ever, how long before I’d notice? I would  
never notice that you had failed to come home ever,  
but only only only that you had not come home  
yet.

I’d notice if you stopped breathing.  
I’d hold my breath, waiting for you  
to start up again. Probably I’d start  
breathing again, knowing your body  
would not. Then I’d get rid of your body,  
somehow. Then I’d sit down with you  
and wait for I don’t know what.

“How about another life?” one would say.  
“This time YOU be Laurel...”.

### Suspended Sentence

My mother’s life — or the years of it I recall —  
consisted of an endless sentence fragment,  
for she eluded endings when she could:  
“No but...” she’d say in the most agreeable  
way, meaning, “You can’t fool me with your  
attempts to understand me, catch me,  
make me disappear” —

as in her answer to, “OK, OK, so what do you  
want me to do!” — “No, but there’s just  
so much I have to put up with and your father  
just doesn’t...”

not answers, but sticks thrust with abstracted  
desperation between the fanged jaws  
of every question.

“No but” she’d say, airily, ceaselessly,  
to the black dumbbell of the telephone,  
“No, but you could have just died!” and

no, but she did, or, anyway, her body  
withered, then dropped away (it took years),  
leaving her, perhaps, safe at last from whatever  
completeness hounded her.

### On the Proliferation of Dickinsonian Poets

I’m Emily. Who are you?  
Are you Emily too?



### Faith in a Vacuum

Vacuuming, at first a pleasure, seeing the carpet pile stand up straight in ordered ranks behind my efficient growling swathes, but then I notice the tell-tale thread, white speck, gray bit of dust on a just-vacuumed spot, go over it again (the vacuum cleaner snarling as savagely as it can) and the bit of stuff is unmoved. Again. Again! DAMN! Is it attached to the rug? No, see, I pick it up — and could just toss it in the trash, but that would be surrender, so I set it back down on the rug and run the vacuum over it...twice.

It may have been jostled slightly, perhaps waved at me as the suction passed overhead. I pick it up and tilt the vacuum and FEED the bit of stuff to the vacuum as if to a resisting infant (you'll eat this and LIKE it!) — it's gone.

Now I wonder, what else doesn't get picked up? Vacuuming must do some good: look at all the crap collected in the bag. Have faith, I tell myself, vacuuming on.

### After the Dance

Thousand-star-bright,  
Frosty-clear night —  
Yet who'd lack heat  
On the back seat,  
Where a girdle  
Was no hurdle?  
How'd we do it?  
Nothing to it...

But Time's derision  
Cuts to the quick,  
For no magician  
Tells his best trick.  
(My guess [cough, cough]:  
Before that soft-  
ness [please don't scoff!] —

Here our breath clouds  
Vision. You crowds  
Of the curious,  
Don't be furious;  
Age clouds memory:  
Through those shimmery  
Breath-and-age-smear'd  
Windows, I've peered  
Too, to see this  
Long white-hot kiss  
Make a girdle  
Melt and curdle,

Ah, shimmery  
Dim memory  
Of that dreamy  
Nylon-seamy  
Shim-shim-shimmy —

Before being boffed  
She took it off.)

