

# CITY LIFE

poems on living in a small city



By V.A. Jeffrey

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## High Window

How high the window from the street  
yet near the pulse and sound  
of cars flying off the exit into town  
and of garbage trucks that roar and chug,  
making the walls shake and tremble.

The lulls of silent night rise  
into the dull roar of the business day.  
A rowdy day with dogs barking  
and heels clicking over blaring horns.

The rush of traffic rumbles and bumbles  
late into the evening  
and the pounding pulse of noise  
rises past the high window from the street.

## The People

From my window I see the people;  
the people who live and sleep on the streets.  
The woman who hangs around the north-side church  
who screams wordlessly at demons who aren't there.  
She asked me for a dollar once but I had none  
so she told me she'd go back to her corner  
and stop pretending to be human again.

The man who sits in front  
of the ugly steel and glass condo  
that blocks my view of Mt. Hood,  
sits amidst his many bags stuffed with newspapers,  
sits there, his coke bottle glasses taped together.  
I see him in scorching summer and frigid winter,  
sitting by the condo fountain, just holding his peace.

The people mill around the old church  
across the street on Saturday mornings  
for coffee and doughnuts  
and what little laughter and fellowship  
that can be had.

By the west-side church down the street  
I see the kids who shoot up and pass out.  
Past twelve in the morn, past two in the morn  
the blue and red lights of the police cars  
whirling, whirling, bouncing  
from wall to wall lighting up my room.  
Police probably telling one of the people  
to wake up and move along.

They sleep in the rain and in the chill of winter.  
I see the people trapped where they are,  
the people, restless, for they have no place,  
the people who don't matter  
among the humming hustle and bustle;  
the people no one wants to see.

## A Foggy Night

Fog swirls and swirls like nimbus clouds  
come to rest on the ground  
and muffles the glow of street lantern lights  
that stand apart like lone lighthouses.

No starlight, nor the moon's silver face tonight  
no twinkling skyline over the river,  
only rivers of gray; pearl gray, slate gray  
white gray, black gray - rolling currents of fog,  
forever the night in fog, until dawn's first light.

## Dreamt

What happened today was dreamt last night,  
so odd, so strange that I should recall it at all.

I said *this* and you said *that*  
and then walked past, a little calico cat.

Perhaps tomorrow and its goings-on  
will be revealed, or not.

I suppose I'll know by dawn.

## Sunrise

On the odd Saturday morning I go to the terrace.  
From there the broad peak of St. Helens  
hangs in painterly mists  
and deep rosy hues rise on Mt. Hood.  
The pale moon floats in the west and  
the stars shine faintly.  
Royal colors of sunrise  
burn through the woven sky  
like embers of coal catching fire.  
Light mists covering the night before  
rise and fade like the steam from my tea cup,  
The sun crowns in the east, bright as egg yolk  
and spilling out across the morning sky,  
following the faint moon.

## Scritch'in' and Scratch'in'

It's the first of the month  
and everyone is out and about.  
I saw Mr. Williams trippin' along today.  
He cashed his check and got his groceries.  
"How you been, Mr. Williams?"  
"Alright. Got my fridge full  
for another three weeks. Bread, noodles,  
bologna and cheese, some greens, some hotdogs.  
Got some beer and cigarillos too."  
He nods and smiles  
on his way up the elevator.  
Buses are stuffed with folks today  
it's babies and strollers  
and strollers and babies.  
Check Mart's got a line way out the door.  
Everybody and their mama is at the bank,  
Check Mart, the Social Security office  
or the liquor store.  
I sit in the lobby and shoot the breeze,  
picking up stray pennies. Got a whole lot of them.  
Most of us 'round here  
are scritch'in' and scratch'in' dimes together  
but at least today nobody's broke.



## Traffic

Chains and chains of traffic  
shuttering and jerking along freeways  
stuffed up like clogged veins,  
crawling along, bumbling along,  
endless seas of winking tail lights  
and endless sea of headlights.  
Once they were all in a hurry  
but now bunched like rucking,  
shuttering and bumping along  
in chains.

## Perseids

Meteors hurtle across the sky  
carving diamond dust trails  
that tail over me  
across the blue black sky.  
I lay listening to eager crickets chirp  
smell the scents of a long finished barbecue.  
A siren sounds far away,  
far and below my little grassy hill  
almost touching the warm, starry night  
above the city lights.

## Holiday

Empty streets, empty of clattering cars  
and belching buses.

No blaring horns, no tedious traffic  
chaining through red and green lights.

Tranquil in it's own way is the city.

A lone person walks a dog,  
red and green lights blink and change  
for traffic that isn't there.

Geese cry far up above the clouds,  
leaving for a spell.

Everyone gone, gone for a holiday.

## Mt. St. Helens

So much smoke  
belching out of big, old buses,  
big old buses knocking down the street  
with their fumes trailing behind them,  
fumes from roaring trailer trucks;  
the acrid smoke a burning in the nostrils.  
Smells of rotting garbage rise up,  
a wall of scent spreading as garbage trucks  
rumble down 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue early in the morning.  
But from the terrace high above  
high above the stink and the rank  
and to the north sits the little volcano,  
a rough diamond rock  
standing against the sea blue sky,  
proud and pristine.

## Grub Crawling

We clink glasses full of wine  
after the martinis have gone round.  
The glittering city lights  
herald twilight and they sparkle and shine  
like our bright eyes and happy voices.  
Going grub crawling, going grub trawling!

We seek our pleasure;  
a curry here, a paella there,  
some burst of spice,  
some brightness on the tongue.  
Now a stout, now an ale,  
a splash in the finger bowls,  
mounds of saffron rice  
and the crackle and creme of honeyed brulee!  
We hit the rainy streets again,  
going grub crawling, going grub trawling!

See other poetry titles from this author:

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You can find other works from V.A. Jeffrey at her blog:

<http://pencilword.blogspot.com>

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Hope you enjoyed the book and have a great day! :o)