

TYPICAL TRAGEDIES:  
A BOOK OF POETRY

\*EXCERPT\*

By Patrick Ashe

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## HEAR THE FIGHT HERE

Hear the sound of the Truth  
In the stuttering of forced feat  
The feckless tries and holy cries  
Of failure propped on honored seat

Here is the Unreal seen  
In aging haze and doubting clout  
It reaches through what we all knew  
Was real enough to keep us out

Hear the songs of Cursed Voice  
Sung so discordant that it bleeds  
For we wanted to be hunted  
By the ends of our own deeds

Here is the Blessed Hand  
Forging the hammer to judge right  
Of my own life and our shared strife  
Now is the time to fight. Fight. FIGHT.

## DO I STILL HAVE IT?

Do I still have it?  
Or should I fold my hand and leave?  
Do I still have it?  
Is there a mace up my sleeve?

When you've lost the First World battles  
And you're kicking back in Passchendaele  
The rains of rejection falling harder still  
Making the muck as soft as a mourning veil

In this trench of screens and missed connection  
Or a rudderless boat seeking direction  
From a sky the color of a deep infection  
Glad to still float with holes in each section

So I gotta lotta nerve to flag you down  
And throw one more heart on the unlit pyre  
Because at least one will be pulled  
Then the rest will burn ever higher

Of course, this isn't all there is  
Despite every other message than this  
Try your hand and don't you quit  
Even if I don't still have it

Or I do

Fuck if I know anymore

## THE DAY THAT SHE REMARRIED

The day that she remarried  
I had laid upon my face  
A dozen roses of torn skin  
A reason for disgrace

The day that she remarried  
I didn't click on them  
The pictures of the cruise, her man,  
Her dress from stern to hem

The day that she remarried  
I was not so much bereft  
Nor even caring we never married  
Just that anything was left

The day that she remarried  
I was married, too  
But how can one be truly wed  
To anyone but you

The day that she remarried  
I didn't send my best  
You don't even want it so  
Please enjoy the rest

## EGO-ALTER

You said you wanted Superman

I gave you Clark Kent

You declined, turned off by

The way my arm gets caught

Taking off the suit

## THIS OLD CAR

I'm still driving this old thing  
It's an '82 something or other  
Usually other  
American made piece of work

Ran pretty well for ten years  
Not many miles, just a bad collision  
Really bad  
Never drove the same after that

I was in denial for awhile  
Didn't want to take it into the shop  
Finally did  
Apparently it was extremely overdue

What exactly was wrong  
It was a bit of everything  
Under the hood  
But the dents in the doors were my fault

I got it running for awhile  
Made it to school and work  
I mean  
It only broke down on my time

So I still maintain it

It's all I can afford

But sometimes

I still kick the doors because it kind of sucks



## HOOKS AND CHAINS OF MIND

I am not defined by my hooks and chains of mind  
I am not defined by them but they are with me all the time

I wanted to enjoy a conversation with a friend  
I wanted to enjoy it but the hooks pulled at me again

I wanted to be productive on all the tasks around  
I wanted to be productive but on a chain I'm bound

I am not defined by my hooks and chains of mind  
I am not defined by them but they keep me from my kind

I swore again that I would reach across that finish line  
I swore again I'd do it but by my foot I am entwined

I swore again that I could do a simple little thing  
I swore again I'd do it but a hooked mouth cannot sing

I am not defined by my hooks and chains of mind  
I am not defined by them but I'm the one I must remind

## BABY, LIGHT MINE FIRE

I know now what happens  
With the unstoppable force and the immovable object  
I learn it every day and forget it again  
Until I rant to some poor ear like yours  
Hear the tale of the Centralia, Pennsylvania Mine Fire.

There is a town up there, off Highway 81 revisited  
Under which the coal steam fire burns for decades since  
And decades to come, until it will die  
Exactly like my passion, it keeps burning intensely and  
throughout

It doesn't stop  
And has nowhere to go

This flame is for internal use only

As curious as this event may be, and less for how it concerns me  
Whether a cautionary tale about coal steam treatment  
Or another keen simile or metaphor for me to steal  
Perhaps the most important takeaway from it all  
Is that Centralia, Pennsylvania  
Was all but abandoned long ago.

Won't you be mine neighbor?

## MAUDLIN AGENCY

There is no more poisoned well

No more wounded gazelle

No bluer bruise

No older shoes

No drier lip

No wetter ship

No bloodier pulp

No greater gulp

No smaller hope

No tighter rope

No grayer plant

No greater defeat of can by can't

Than my ego

# WHISTLING IN THE DARK BY THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

It was a song I heard then  
From days of innocence  
But now it's just a symbol  
Of what I've become since

For what is surely giant  
Is dark that is manmade  
You can call me a liar  
I'll call a shade a shade

I know I have no excuse  
For bitchings in my rap  
Like sprinkles in your ice cream  
They'll both turn into crap

But you, too, should be grateful  
For sore eyes in the light  
Which comes from someone greater  
Than the day or the night

Does it matter if I'm glum  
When in the dark I sing  
For there is where I still hear  
The few bells that still ring

## CALL AND RESPONSE

When the world says

Go away

We don't want you here

One should respond

Too bad

Take it up with who sent me

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick Ashe is a writer and rock musician with over a decade of experience in nonprofit program evaluation. He is an Eagle Scout, graduate of Appalachian State and Indiana University, and an instructor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After studying and working in five states, he resides with his family in his hometown of Winston-Salem. He is the author of *Upon This Pale Hill* (2020) and *Typical Tragedies: A Book of Poetry* (2020).

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