

Peter Vertacnik

Collars

1.

He hates his collar: always creased and blue;
He wants a job where he can wear a tie.
Though still unsure of what else he could do,
He hates his collar: always creased and blue,
Torn, stained by grease, by sweat. "That's it, I'm through,"
He mutters frequently each day — a lie
He hates. His collar always creased and blue,
He wants a job where he can wear a tie.

2.

He has a job where he must wear a tie;
He wishes his white collar weren't so tight.
Though moneywise he's more than getting by,
He has a job where he must wear a tie,
Compelling all employees to comply
With policies he rarely feels are right.
He has a job where he must wear a tie;
He wishes his white collar weren't so tight.

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Teacher's Lament

No longer can I keep this under wraps:
I see no faces, just the tops of heads.
They while away the time with swipes and taps,

Necks bent toward glowing desk-tops, palms, and laps.
Perhaps some haven't slept or missed their meds.
No longer can I keep this under wraps:

I've lost my students to the latest apps.
We waste our days in class at loggerheads.
They while away the time with swipes and taps;

I chide and lecture till my lungs collapse.
Like winter flu, the disaffection spreads.
No longer can I keep this under wraps,

But still must watch the useless hours elapse.
Often, I wish they'd stay home in their beds.
They while away the time with swipes and taps,

Until I reprimand them in ALL CAPS,
Though not enough to rip their trance to threads.
No longer can I keep this under wraps:
They while away the time with swipes and taps.

My Mama's Schmaltz

It seemed she only laughed
Or looked remotely happy
When recollecting tales
I found extremely sappy.

If I came home from school
And saw her sipping tea,
I knew the next few hours
Would not belong to me.

She'd gab about past trips,
Trite trinkets she collected,
Her face a tear-puffed smile;
Yet I felt unaffected.

She'd gush about the time,
One anniversary,
My dad bought all the mums
From Gaertner's nursery.

Most stories would begin
With "Once, when I was pretty . . ."
But I, a selfish child,
Was not disposed to pity.

Those tedious afternoons
I'd fidget at the table,
And she would share her life —
Part memory, part fable.