



All poems by Charles Ellsworth Smith ©2002

High and Prospect by James Cardarelli and Charles Ellsworth Smith

This collection was written in Bethesda, Maryland 1967-69 when I lived on High and Prospect streets

High and Prospect

by Jim Cardarelli and Charles Ellsworth Smith

You were lovely

In Irish linen

Half walking and half floating

Across the green grass

Trees behind you.

You high on the corner

Lift your wings now

Inside my attic

Prospects feather sings

Do not stand beside me dark father
And glower, the moon upsets the shade
Do not hold your pride against
The sunlit hill
As dragons will
And died

Forgetful of tomorrow
I remain
goodbye
And walked away
A fistful of dough
In my left
Pocket still has the
same old hole

A column coming up the hill

Sky blue column

Coming.

Do not, he said

Somewhat

Foolish.

They fell in large

Numbers, shivering,

Each one in his

Hand a gun

In his heart

A flower.

Beneath the moon

the shade comes up

And sings to you of morning

Soft summer dreams

Old hat

And cheese

I ask you

Why not come join me

Undercover of

The sea

You

Come to me

And cry

Long wet tears

Like taffy.

I await her expectantly

Not knowing

What to do

Music

Prances around me

I wonder what news

waiting

I cannot create the grapes
which must have laced
your lips with indigo
I cannot on this dark

I followed her blindly down
The path echoing her mad laughter
With my footprints.

I hear her singing
And I wonder
What she will bring
With her?
But one cannot rush these things
Slowly like
Pottery
Cracking in sun
Bone to dust

Some thoughts wait for you forever
and some
like falling Stars
shine in your hands
and etch a pattern in your palm.

Don't scold me father
As I did not know you
Lying in your bed
On Sunday mornings.
I searched for you
There
Beneath the covers.

I sank once down

Like a lost boy loving

To find in you

The moon

If somehow I would

Miss you in the narrow

Morning's wishing

I would dream to

You the sunrise

I used to wander on the sea not far from home

And anticipate the wind,

I would wander

A hundred times or more

Back and forth

Waiting.

Mabs I wonder

how it is

we are

and for a time

departed.

Lying on a song

I lingered a note

too long,

the fleet wind

scatters.

If for this moment

The whole world trembles

And the earth shakes

Thunder off its weary

Remember Mary

I love you

If moon by moon

The balance hung in your hands,

And beautiful Sunday

Cast a net

Across your hair,

Could please open your eyes?

I'm trying

He said slowly,

Each time to take a deep breath

But you know how it is

Violets all around you.

In your bell like whispers, crack
Forfeit your sense to darkness
Fathoms below you she lies
Naked in the water.
A sense of loneliness
Crawls inside her silence
A bell that peals out
The golden broken tones that are her sorrow.
She sings of gulls
That glide and lulls
Your mind into tomorrow.

It is like silence

My sorrow

I alone and in the

Nighttime changing

Stone.

Catch me

If you would

Or let me fly

In shadowed cage

It's an awful long way

to come for money

I mean

we could be listening

deeply

and you wouldn't

say a thing.

It's hard to get into it anymore

I mean long things

with order and form.

Long things

With marble fingers

Shaping your mind

Slowly to A and B

and A

Joe, Joe, Joe

You will always know

What little shoes whisper

Joe

That you could see

In me what's blind

To see,

For all the world

I love you.

Move back the chairs

It's over

I mean the hooting

Take your mind with you

When you go looting

For underneath this

ragged end

Lies a prayer.

My feet are prisoners

In boots I walk

Dreaming.

I hit my head

and stars shine

I have waited twenty-five years for

Bells to ring

On windows you

lean

You crowd around me

You vibrate and twitch

You sound the trumpets

Call.

You screech and wail

Your traffic turns

To sea

And slowly

smile

One day I couldn't sing

I just couldn't

Sing

Summer

dreams

Please

on your bridge

standing stay

The clown desires it

I know and the

King will too

He says

In time,

Standing stay

And the

wind will

Away with you

Forever.

Power crazed

They lie in bed

Thinking God a celibate.

Sea change [reflection on The Tempest]

To joust

He gave his mind to paper dragons

Set fire to his sails

His ship soon becalmed

His body fell to fish

And sank five fathoms down;

He will sing to you

From mermaids

In the sea

The shadows vanish
I see your eyes and smile
Fire for an instant
Then the sky
You are breathing.

Too many it seems at
time would come their
last weary stitch imagining.

Touching gently her hand
I walked along the shore
Talking,
With gestures of bird
We danced the moon to light

We walked
awkwardly down the hill.
Her feet digging into the soil
like sand sifting through her toes
and I clumsily
in my boots
dreaming birds.

You may be saying to me
The beautiful night
Has died
You may have skipped me
Altogether
In my madness.

I throw a stone to you
You sink with it,
If I could only breathe
In streams
I would lie.

You may draw

My circling dreams

The closer to

Your mind which

Flies on purple wings

unfolding

THROUGH FIRE

Hearing a saw

I awake

And see it fall

The old oak

Falling.

Blue Jay's squawk

I see its leaves

The old trees

Scatter

From the pit comes the Cat

Rusty jaws screeching

It fashions the pyre

And I

Like some angry elf

Or proud matador

Hold up my hand

Palm outstretched

To this yellow monster

And, with as much

Ceremony as I can muster

Tap my empty wrist

And it stops

The noise stops –

A little red-faced man
Climbs down from the brain
Of this slumbering Caterpillar
Perspiring

It's six thirty he yells
"Isn't that about time to quit"
I growl
He just nods and smiles
"Gotta go 'til dark," he says
"Gotta burn this tree."
The gist of it being that
Somebody's got to do it
Somebody's going to do it, anyway.

II.

I was wishing for crickets
Except it was a
Cold October night
And the crickets had almost
Disappeared.
The autumn moon
Hung alone balanced by the
Emptiness that surrounded it.

Through my attic window
At the edge of the pit
Two hundred yards away
I could see
The old oak burning
And I felt like a
Casual visitor, or spirit
Just dropping in.

So I put on my coat
With Mary
Strode across
The hard packed
Clay that separated
Us from
Things of fire.

III.

By now the wind was blowing cold
Ever so slightly
As to send giant
Ashes spiraling
Towards the sky.

Even from our distance
Walking
We could see the sparks
Like fireflies
Some would disappear
Straightaway and others
Seem to search the
Burning sky for minutes
Looking for a special place
A hole in space
To disappear.

As we came up to it
And put ourselves
Between the woods
And the tree burning,
I saw at last a
Giant wooden Indian
Down after so long standing
It's native dreams
Softly leaving this time
For eternity
And I thought of the Phoenix
And Wounded Knee

Some distant resurrection
Calling, calling
Leave the greed

Turning toward the woods
That soon would be a mall
Our home no longer cozy
Destined for the wrecking ball

We could feel the fire dancing
Slowly waning in the night
And we
Like blind children
Upon this planet spinning
Longing for
The hole in space
That leads us out of time.

All poems composed 1967-69