

The Rock Face
by Donna Atwood

Wham!

I am face to face
With a wall of rock
Confused as to how I got to this point
I climb up,
Higher and higher facing the sheer cliff
The sky above me, below me the ground.
Higher I climb,
Facing every obstacle I come upon,
Reaching deep within me
To face the demands I see before me.
To scale the cliff I must overcome my fear and face it head on.
I know it's a long way up...
And a long way down,
With each foothold,
Each finger grasping
I must face the possibility of failure.
I might not make the top.
But I am brave, a warrior, a survivor.
I reach up and up,
Clinging to a small crevice
Face to face with the rock wall,
But in an instant
I'm falling,
Tumbling downward,
Downward and
Land face down....
Into my pillow...
Awake and ALIVE!

The alarm rings.
I jump in fear.
I tremble, nervous and terrified
At the realization I now must face
A classroom of 13 year olds the week before summer vacation.

Oh how I long to be facing that rock wall high above the ground.

Anatta

Look at me, I'm not my face
Look at me, I'm not my race
Look at me, I'm not vocation,
nor the t-shirt from vacation
Not my means of locomotion,
Quiet daily prayer devotion
My sex, my gender, are not me
less my liking bitter tea.
The husk that covers flesh and bone
is no more me than grass is loam
I'm not my bark
I'm not my bite
Nor how my scars reflect the light
My actions may be purpose driven,
I'm not their master nor the vision
How you perceive me is not me
That's all on you, ... don't you see?

Look at me, I'm much like you,
Empty thoughts, regrets, milieu
A million years of human struggle
making primates into muggles, unaware of what they are
or why perception's so ajar.

I quite expect that me to you is like the contrails airplanes trace.

Look at me, I'm not my face.

Tom Corey

Unexpected Faces

They file in with eager faces
 Not at all what I expected,
Courteous, respectful,
 These faces we've rejected.
Rugged, but shaven,
 With little hair to frame
Or guard their weary eyes
 That have long held our blame.
Thoughtful and wise,
 Despite their seclusion,
They smile and laugh
 In this grim institution.

Expectant and patient,
 They show me concern
As they struggle to teach me,
 And I struggle to learn.
Each and every tough face
 Has its story to tell,
From the family to school,
 To the streets, to the cell.

I ask and they answer.
 Their faces don't lie.
Past mistakes and regrets
 They can't erase or deny.
But each face shows compassion
 Next to sadness and fear.
We are close, but so distant
 The rules are quite clear.
I go home to my life,
 They go back to their hell.
But these faces of prisoners
 Live in me still.
I was their teacher,
 And they taught me well.

Nancy Dickerson

One Face

The crowd is a sea of faces
But I see no one
Until I see one face
One face
Can take the place
Of the human race
One face to embrace
When I sit face to face
Without haste
We face the music
We face each other's truths
Face the pain
Face to face
We face the space
Between us and another human face
With grace
Until we can displace
The disgrace
Of the human race
Face to face
With one face

Rachel Vigue Hyde

Visage One and Six

by Michael Lipton

1.

I can hear her singing
In a voice neither good nor bad
But sweet
She is doing something
Folding something
Ironing something
Her hands busy
Her mind free
And she sings

I don't understand the words
But I know them
I've heard her sing them a thousand
times

It's a song from long ago
From when there were Tsars
From when a continent and an ocean
Was barely far enough away
From when little girls
Would still sing little girl songs
And wonder why their parents
worried so

I can hear her singing
When my hands are busy
When the steam rises off the iron
And the soup begins to boil
And the soup begins to boil
And my mind is free

And I sing

6.

I took the kid to the quarry
Not long after his father died
But a year or two before
He had the good grace to admit it
I showed him the old stone rings
Stirred ancient ash
Picked broken bottles
From the weeds
And explained the mysteries
Of ring tabs
I looked for something of the father
Of the brother
Something good
Or something bad
Something to love or hate
Things the father had in spades
But found neither
Just the boy
And
In his worried eyes
The mother just passed

New Face of Man?

The face of the man/child
Holding your life in his hands, hands, and what may be
Hands too small and unmarred by life
Never having done a moral moment of manual labor
Still
Hold in unbalanced ill will
The sadness and fear that grips mankind
Like your face
Candle lit staring in a darkened room
Toward the mirror before us
Frozen in place of awe
As you morph before your own eyes
Man/Woman to devil to man/woman to devil and back again
This man/child stands before us
No mirror or candle light near
he morphs before our eyes
Man to devil
with no return
A one-way ticket into hell
That has become our world

Dyan Lombardi

Face to Face with a Young *BMS*

On the face of it, yours has all the requisite things
(In common with my own): two eyes, a nose,
A mouth, with brow and cheeks like burgeoning wings
Beginning to set off the life you chose
To live alone. Unremarkable—until
Unveiled: the mind behind the artifice.
Then, like variations on the color wheel
(You told me you liked pink—not PINK), a near miss
Occurs, for I see the tribute that we come
To pay mirror physical attributes: *Your* eyes, *my* new vision;
Your nose, *my* scent of solitude not undone
By *your* mouth, the vessel for words that mark my decision
To write a lone and lovely poem of you and me—
Recognition, on the face of it, of two becoming one.

Beth MacRae

SHADES FROM SEASONS PAST

They visit me in dreams, like Marley's ghost
Apparitions I cannot forget ... or won't
Sometimes benign, sometimes to haunt
Me with some crime I now regret ... or should

They lie buried in a rented storage hut
Concealed between the folds
Of that badly torn and moldy nylon tent
I haven't seen in ten or twenty years

They nap in cardboard boxes in the basement
Where I dropped them years ago
Too weary, after mother died,
To deal with what might lurk inside

They congregate in attic trunks
Mutant moths, immune to Naphthalene
Infesting sweaters made by hand,
Sleeves too long for chimpanzees

Worse yet, they now proliferate
On Flickr, Facebook, Instagram
Descend from artificial Clouds
Like unrelenting acid rain

Years ago, when they appeared, I'd turn away
Ignore them, if I could
But, now that I am old, I welcome them
Invite them in and hope they'll stay

Frank Kelly

FACE IT

In 2016 when Donald announced he would run
We all thought he was kidding, just having some fun

He kept a straight FACE as he spoke of his strength
Yet the truth, which he stretched, was at maximum length

On the FACE of his buildings, giant letters, ten feet tall
RUMP's emblazoned in gold to bedazzle us all

The marble FACED edifices, so shiny and bright
Intend to show everyone the owner's great might

The FACE in his mirror reflects to his eye
The most important persons... me, myself, and I

Come election, we were FACED with two differing choices
The president won everything, through electoral voices

At FACE value the winner was a question, at best
Whose ambition to rule seemed to be his true quest

Representing us all, he said he would do
But two-FACED he was, speaking but for a few

When FACED down with hecklers, the man at the top
Spews nastiness and insults, refusing to stop

He's a bold-FACED liar, spouting out alternative facts
Complaining about fake news and those internet hacks

Yet the hypocrite loses FACE every time he speaks up
For his unbelievable diatribes, he should win the gold cup

He should hide his FACE in shame, with his head hung down low
For being such a whiner, giving voice to those who sow

The seeds of doubt, the nonsense, the absurd
Using lies, deceit, dishonesty - to spread his viral word

He humiliates, berates, demeans, and bullies, too
Talks foolishness and untruths 'til his FACE has turned to blue

His "yes" men keep him happy, do his dirty work quite well
But the egg upon his FACE has had a very horrid smell

Time and again he's tripped up, fallen flat upon his FACE
For lack of qualified advisors to keep him in his place

Saving FACE is a constant issue, as left challenges the right
But compromise and honor should be considered in this fight

About FACE on real problems, making little or no sense
Does the Donald ever contemplate the national expense?

He's at home on his golf courses, admiring the FACES of his clubs
But not in confronting the issues, which he very frequently flubs

As Latinos journey northward, and FACE up to his magnificent wall
"Go back to where you came from" it announces to them all

A monument to Trump, with his name upon its FACE
Will put all those rotten Mexicans right back into their measly place

"Let's FACE it, they aren't needed!" Mr. Trump will loudly shout
But our country's greatest history came from immigrants, no doubt?

In FACE to FACE meetings with his Soviet counterpart
Trump praised Putin's awesome leadership, fine mind, and good heart

White supremacists and Nazis are terrific people, too
Isn't the FACE of evil within his narrow view?

But wait - those football players, protesting down upon one knee
Are far more dangerous beings than the Russians, don't you see?

Trump taunts the little "Rocket Man," afraid to lose FACE
While contemplating destruction of the entire human race

We need a talented leader, who can prove his mortal worth
Before nuclear annihilation wipes us from the FACE of planet earth

Americans with long FACES... what's the problem that you see?
Is it the emperor's fine new clothes with no fabric to be?

To FACE all the facts - both alternative and real
One must FACE up to the truth, that's the absolute deal

The FACE of danger, so reckless, so worrisome, so large
Is screaming for ethical leadership to sanely take charge

Our country's true majority must FACE the music that we hear
And rectify the fatal calamity that most of us now fear

Let's FACE it my friends... the end hasn't come
But some very troubling things have surely been done.

Tom Steger

FACE TIME

I hear my phone a ringing - it's starting now to chime
That means only one thing - it must be my face time

My grandsons are calling, to give me their news
Tell stories, ask questions, and relate their young views

I'm watching and listening, as they chatter away
They don't understand how they brighten my day!

Gavin talks about Legos, the toys now, of choice
My heart is a leaping at the sound of his voice

Giving detail upon detail about what he's just built
I'm lost in his description, I confess now with guilt

I tune in so carefully, trying to take it all in
With his never-ending explanation, I do nothing but grin

His face, so expressive, his smile, oh, so sweet
Having time to share with him is an absolute treat

As he continues with news about school and his friends
His stories keep on going, and they just never end

The scoop about Riley, his girlfriend, you see
Keeps me laughing in stitches as it just tickles me

There's news about Star Wars, and movies to see
And he asks about Oma, and what's new with me

He talks about dinosaurs, insects, and birds
With an ever-growing vocab he is chock full of words

When Doodle is done, and PeeWee's turn starts
The dialog changes, but still touches my heart

He's a two-year old whiz bang, whose brain doesn't stop
Anxious to spend time with his one and only Poppop

The cell phone he's mastered, way better than me
He manipulates the functions with true proficiency

Colin talks about day care, his friends, work, and play
Telling me about those things in his special way

He digs dirt in the sandbox, and loves the grimy mess
When he describes it to me, I am laughing, I confess

Barefoot is his preference, shoes are off his filthy feet
For him, the thought of "dirty" is just as good as neat

When I quiz about the potty, how he's doing with the task
He tries to dodge the question, wishing that I didn't ask

He's happy with his diaper 'cause he's a very busy man
It allows him to keep going, rather than sitting on the can

Fire trucks and green tractors, yellow dozers for some fun
The boy is constantly moving, always active, on the run

When the conversation's over, and he's said his last good-bye
He touches the magic button, and vanishes from my eye

I know that face time's over, and our boys have had their say
I'm already awaiting our face time another day.

Tom Steger

Face to Face

Down Grafton Street, a baglady sits low on a milking stool,
against the sandstone, all she owns spilling out of her trolley,
untamed gray tangles frame her wrinkles, drawn and sunken
craggy gob a frown, but in her timeless gypsy sight,
she's still pretty. She calls to me through gappy teeth seductively,
I will tell your fortune for five euro, I did not want to know.

I go where the locals go, against the tidal jostles of scrubbed toffs
bound for granite Trinity, to the park square to greet the high cheeks
and Norman nose of the sad bronze tart with a cart, her braided hair
in a bun. By the wheelbarrow, I belt Molly's ditty just for fun,
to chuckles from passersby, "In Dublin's fair city, through streets
broad and narrow, cockles and mussels alive, alive o."

At the library's iron gates there hangs in anniversary
a portrait of the troubled Yeats, pale brow over pensive eyes,
the blue veil of sky cast aside, a thoughtful hand
on his chin, a slim finger to his ear, he strains to hear
dim low voices, each word dropping slow, singing
the dark rising Easter tide of nineteen sixteen.

In the park, a garden gnome hides in a cove in the hedge.
I follow its clownish side glance and nod, as the timid flowers
rustle from their round beds, it guides me to the edge of a sunlit grove
where stark visages of familiar strangers met by chance
abide in the ridges, whorls and boles of the knobby oak,
whose limbs are hands in painted Shiva's waving dance.

I pause at the bust of a writer, a manly elf, a fighter's nose
as red as his wit, a bloke with a certain style, he spent some days
in a Village pub where I bent a few myself. Brendan Behan,
now seen rendered a dunce in the wallpaper art, a seat at table
in the corner nook, a disheveled poet, tumbler to his lips
before an open book, who tips awhile until body and soul part ways.

I am struck speechless, stopping the pace of the city's beat,
by a tall, young man, so down on his luck he slept on the street, knots
of dreads curtain his head under a bobble hat, a boy's thin beard,
lost eyes kept in the cold vacuum of space, squats back to the wall
straddling a rucksack with a sign that read fortunes told five euro;
once a handsome Tiresias, he sat in the seer's place.

Gary Weatherby

Not Happy with Your Faces, Men?

Not happy with your face?

Fret not, the experts say.

Be grateful you live in this age.

You can be photogenic today,

Not the portrait of Dorian Gray.

A double chin is no longer in;

Reconstructive surgery is not a sin.

Injections can puff up those lips.

Blemishes can be taken away.

Botox and fillers work wonders,

Like Viagra for the face. So, hey,

How much are you willing to pay

To restore fullness to the cheeks?

It's done in a matter of weeks.

A nip and a tuck? A perpetual grin!

You have wrinkles 'round your mouth,

Skin flaps, age spots, and warts,

And jowls moving further south?

Use cleansing creams and a facial peel;

Folks will say you're "hot" – for real!

Frown lines and crow's feet must go.

Exfoliation and masks are cool.

Not to want a young face again,

Why anyone would be a fool.

But wait, men, remember Lincoln who was so tall?

Just grow a beard and hide it all.

Leave that mole and accept your fate.

Though you are ugly, they'll call you "great."

And when your foes say you are "two faced," for fun,

Like Abe, simply say, "If I had another face,

Do you think I'd use *this one*?"

Martin A. Sweeney