

The Man with the Mouth Harp  
by Beth Walker  
Prose Poem for John C. Popper

based on Rilke's line  
"The poem that comes through me..."

These cast down, downtrodden, castaway men and women of this plain life have something to say, but no one cares to hear. Who then is out of tune?

Take the man with the mouth harp.

He was born on the east coast of the continental plate at the end of the 1960s, unable to read, except upside down and backwards. When he told his jokes, they were never funny, ever, and he was so fat he wore a black hat, as if that would hide anything. He carried 14 harmonicas, each in a different key, in pockets lining a 50-pound leather bandolier belted by a strong loop for his Katana. He liked to frighten people on airplanes and in restaurants.

He wore his poems like his pain, on his chest, for ammunition.

But when this man sang, he threw back his head, mouth gashed toward the skies, nothing less than cries of angels coming out. And when he stooped to blow on that harp, he blasted the gates off hell just to better hear demons beg mercy.

That's called the Blues, when poetry moves through us like wails.

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Soul Vampire  
by Garrett Carroll

A thin, wispy veneer beneath a hundred layers of skin, between flesh and skull.  
Your eyes measure the distance.  
Inches perhaps. Millimeters most likely.  
The incision only takes a few minutes, the incision only takes, it does not harm.  
The pick contorts the soul and flesh, you feel the breadth of blue between the shell of flesh and bones,  
The incision only takes a few minutes, the incision is a temporary Devil.  
You see the eyes of the victim reopen with only a glimpse of pain.  
A little paler than before, but a cracked chip of the soul is all you need to feed yourself.  
The incision only takes, it does not kill.  
The incision is only temporary, the soul will heal.

[garrettcarrrollwriting.wordpress.com](http://garrettcarrrollwriting.wordpress.com)

new ashtray  
by Matt Wall

you're so clean, see-through  
I'm just gonna wreck you, ruin your good looks  
I know that's your plight  
you were created, for me to dirty  
it's sad  
I feel sorry, for your purpose  
but  
I won't take that away from you

[www.ihatemattwall.com](http://www.ihatemattwall.com)

See you next Tuesday  
by B. L. Koller

You lured him in just like me.  
With foundations of promises and dreams.  
You knew he wouldn't come if I wasn't there  
So you weaved your spidery web of half truths.  
I was there.  
And then I left.  
And that's when you dug the fangs in.  
He'd come for me, and only found you.  
It took a few drinks,  
And some loud TVs in a bar.  
But you took him into your room.  
Knowing how I felt about him.  
Knowing how he felt about me.  
And with alcohol and lies you seduced.  
A black widow spider.  
A cheater.  
And then you wondered why we didn't want to see you next Tuesday.  
C  
U  
N  
T.  
Boom.

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Dermatillomania  
by Slaidey Valheim

The mounds are living,  
pressurised and vibrating;  
low indiscernible voices  
only I can hear.  
I dig dig dig them out  
ask them to quiet down—  
I am not so bad and  
neither are they.  
Excavate the core.  
Take everything filthy  
and dump it  
on a square, plush;  
extra absorbent plot.  
I am a graveyard  
of perfectly manicured holes  
6-foot-deep  
and ready for all the  
hateful dead waste.

<https://linktr.ee/SlaideyV>