

## A Perfect World

*Reed Richards*

Shy people would be kings and queens  
of their own secret realms.  
They might require everyone to wear sunglasses  
for an hour every day while conversing  
with strangers.

Jowly dogs wouldn't slobber.  
I would give cats ten lives, and in return  
when I go to bed Spud  
would quit pouncing on my toes.  
It's fun but I need sleep, plus  
it makes holes in the blanket.

Burger King  
would stop making crusty french fries;  
the rude lady  
in the hospital cashier's office would get fired  
and would send notes of apology to everyone she's  
been rude to, and we would say,  
"Fine, but you are still fired."

Suffering  
would be God's way of forgiving us.

It would snow  
sometimes, for taking pictures, but I wouldn't  
bother the farmers with it when they need  
good weather. Horses are nice when they let you  
come right up to them with a hand outstretched  
full of grass from the other side of the fence.  
They take it carefully between their teeth  
and let you pat their nose.

## Not

much else would spring to hand when  
our wishes outrun our needs.  
We wouldn't want to miss the great pleasure  
of going looking and being reunited  
with things thought lost. This morning  
I knocked over a stack of books  
and found one I thought I would  
never see again, full of many wonderful poems  
by Hungarian poets! In my head Hungary  
was a land of sentimental gypsies,  
of rustic kitchen curtains with cheap lace,  
of tole-painting peasants' funny attempts  
at making things symmetrical. You think their eyes  
must be on the sides of their heads, like birds'.  
They speak a brutal, complicated language.  
They eat rutabagas and clap their rough hands  
and dance like hens and bears  
to brutal, complicated music. Bartok is God's way  
of settling scores with Liszt and Brahms,  
but what about war and pestilence,  
what about Hitler and Stalin?  
But now I love Hungary because the poets  
are sad enough and no sadder. Life for them  
is brutal and complicated. They make lace  
out of burlap, a world out of rubble.  
Maybe we will learn.