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## Poem 18 from Geo-Bestiary

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## Poem 18 from Geo-Bestiary

I was commanded, in a dream naturally,  
to begin the epitaphs of thirty-three friends  
without using grand words like love pity pride  
sacrifice doom honor heaven hell earth:

1. O you deliquescent flower
2. O you always loved long naps
3. O you road-kill Georgia possum
4. O you broken red lightbulb
5. O you mosquito smudge fire
6. O you pitiless girl missing a toe
7. O you big fellow in pale-blue shoes
8. O you poet without a book
9. O you lichen without tree or stone
10. O you lion without a throat
11. O you homeless scholar with dirty feet
12. O you jungle bird without a jungle
13. O you city with a single street
14. O you tiny sun without an earth
15. Forgive me for saying good-night quietly
16. Forgive me for never answering the phone
17. Forgive me for sending too much money
18. Pardon me for fishing during your funeral
19. Forgive me for thinking of your lovely ass
20. Pardon me for burning your last book
21. Forgive me for making love to your widow
22. Pardon me for never mentioning you

23. Forgive me for not knowing where you're buried
24. O you forgotten famous person
25. O you great singer of banal songs
26. O you shrike in the darkest thicket
27. O you river with too many dams
28. O you orphaned vulture with no meat
29. O you who sucked a shotgun to orgasm
30. Forgive me for raising your ghost so often
31. Forgive me for naming a bird after you
32. Forgive me for keeping a nude photo of you
33. We'll all see God but not with our eyes

*Jim Harrison* is an award-winning author of seven novels, four volumes of novellas and seven collections of poetry, including *The Shape of the Journey: New and Collected Poems*, and a memoir *Off to the Side*. He read as part of Poetry Night at Grand Valley State University in October 2003. Reprinted by permission of the author.