

Open Mic

As I gaze upon a small stage
That barely holds a singer
Whose fingers are glued to his guitar,
The question forms again in my mind:

What the heck am I doing here?

I feel as out-of-place
As a milk bucket under a bull,
Surrounded by young adults
And adult wanna-bees,
Crowded into a secluded café
That missed the bus to this century.

What the heck am I doing here?

In this darkened neighborhood café,
The “here and now” is “there and then,”
A living testament to the ‘60s,
Where the walls and the people are plastered
In the ancient rituals of anarchy.
Students, both actual and alleged,
Cloak tables and booths with ambivalence;
They partake of liquid destruction
Strong enough to power my car
From New York to L.A. several times over.

What the heck am I doing here?

The stage soon becomes empty,
Devoid of the singer and his pet rock...guitar;
I sip from a glass of hard apple cider
While pondering whether to take the stage
Or cling to the bar and join my friends *du jour*
On their ride to oblivion,
Wondering again from time to time:

What the heck am I doing here?

I take a step forward, and then take a few more
Until I walk out the door of the café,
Through a cloud of smoke that matched
The ones between the smokers' ears.
As I drove home, it occurred to me that
While I may have attended an "open mic,"
The patrons' minds and hearts were closed
To every thought except for one
I'm sure they all shared with me:

What the heck am I doing here?

© 2004 by Robert E. Blackwell