

# THE AWAKENING

*Lee Evans*

A poor man, homeless for the night,  
Lay down upon a rubbish heap  
Beside the city harbor, where  
A Titan's statue cleft the air  
With upraised torch that gave no light.  
He drifted into dreamless sleep.

One would have thought, to see that man  
Lie sleeping there, that he had died  
Sometime before, and had decayed,  
Like all the refuse where he lay.  
The table scraps and rusted cans  
Seemed fragments of his shattered mind.

The dawn rose up above the sea  
Next morning, as the garbage fled  
Your homes toward the city dump.  
And one huge load backed slowly up,  
And shifted all of its debris  
Upon the sleeping vagrant's bed.

Oh, what a rude awakening  
For one so dead to all the world!  
The seagulls screamed; an avalanche  
Of putrid offal left to chance  
Did gag the hobo's mouth and sting,  
As out he coughed the wretched swill.

"God damn you!" When the man could speak,  
He scrambled up the stinking mound  
And stammered curses at the sky—  
Where Liberty still flourished high  
The torch of freedom for the weak  
And the oppressed to rally round.

Anon the poor pariah cried  
In prophecy for all our sins,  
As reeling on that jagged crest  
Of reeking trash, he shook his fist:  
"If Freedom is the answer, why  
Does all its refuse bury men?"

“I stumble through the wind and rain,  
And break my back to build your homes.  
Upon my broken knees I crawl—  
Although you promise Light to all,  
And refuge from the tyrant’s chains.  
Oh, how much longer must I groan?”

But righteous wrath must soon be spent,  
When nothing can restrain its thrust  
With outlets for its energy.  
The pauper sank upon his knees,  
And gasped for breath upon the bent  
And bloody wreckage of a bus—

But not to pray. He felt the sleep  
Ascending from his worn-out shoes,  
Along his tattered trousers’ seams,  
And through his abdomen, beneath  
His rib cage—where his heartbeat grew  
Too heavy to sustain his grief.

Across the sky the sun went down  
Toward the western wasted land,  
And all about the Titan’s feet  
The waves that washed the harbor leaped—  
While still within the hollow hand  
The lightless torch loomed o’er the town.

“The Awakening” © 2006 by Lee Evans

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