

S.P. ZITNER

Two Sonnets

1. Hearsay

They say you said we'd met, but *en passant*,
so briefly that you'd hardly caught my name,
confusing me with some ass who had the same
bad French, bad manners and pretentious cant.
They say you said it surely wasn't you
up-ended a manhattan on my head,
shouting, "Piss off"—then charmed us into bed.
You said that *all* the stories were untrue.

Say what you will to whom, but every day
is the anniversary of some indiscretion
or worse that haunts your self-possession.
Don't fret. I'll always second what you say;
I won't burlesque our bed-life or your pout
or all the rest we're both well off without.

2. A Second Chance

Soon enough we'll meet again in hell,
where we spent the last of our long married life,
and resume our travesty of man-and-wife:
me hating the cigarette-and-liquor smell
of your undoing, and the nightly "Nothing,
never" in your stare; you, mock-meeek, loathing
my condescension and my casual
dishonesty, my wielding language like a knife

Or if death's mindless pity should erase
all that, we'd love again as at the start:
even our silences the heart-to-heart
of two made whole and one in each embrace—
then lose that paradise of wasted breath,
dying a third and just as painful death.