

SUBMITTED VERSION IN AUGUST 2015

Wing On

for James Schuyler

What pebbles to place on the poet's tombstone
Jiggle them in our pockets during a secular service

at Wing On, the old Chinese funeral home on Spadina
A row of bluets to stain the stone

Just one greasy lipstick kiss on his granite
in a ruby shade called *Willing*

not smeared all over like Oscar Wilde's marble stone
Set delphinium feathers and Noxzema jars

pill bottles filled with catalogue seeds
a tiny plastic boat to swim out to

It's pink-shirted teenagers day up the street
Honk for Equal Love they wave at truckers and me

Let's flashmob the grotto at Lourdes
Let's fishnet the legs of all the girls

Amaryllis, hyacinth, every shade of rosehip
a *cross-stitched border of spruce and juniper*

Let's scoop a few coins into the busker's cup
And buy the poet a meal

Why don't we take one yellow song, carefree
and refined, put it on a long stem and stand it

in a tall skinny crystal vase? Add a pair
of topsiders to wear on the little boat

VERSION AT TIME OF ACCEPTANCE IN FEBRUARY 2015

Wing On

for James Schuyler

Some pebbles and beads for your grave
to hold all through your jazz memorial

in the Wing On funeral home
A row of bluets to stain the stone

Just one greasy lipstick kiss on granite
in a ruby shade called *Willing*

not smeared like Oscar Wilde's tomb
Delphinium feathers and Noxzema jars

pill bottles filled with catalogue seeds
a plastic toy sailboat for windy days

It's pink-shirted teenagers' day up the street
Honk for Equal Love they wave

Let's flashmob the grotto at Lourdes
Let's fishnet the legs of all the girls

Amaryllis, hyacinth, every shade of rosehip
a *cross-stitched border of spruce and juniper*

Toss a few coins in the busker's cup
And buy the poet a meal

A brand new pair of running shoes
to wear on your little floating boat

Sing a silver song, carefree
and refined, stand it in a tall skinny vase

FIRST SET OF COMMENTS

Wing On

for James Schuyler

Some pebbles and beads for your grave
to hold all through your jazz memorial

in the Wing On funeral home
A row of bluets to stain the stone

Just one greasy lipstick kiss on granite
in a ruby shade called *Willing*

not smeared like Oscar Wilde's marble tomb
Delphinium feathers and Noxzema jars

pill bottles filled with catalogue seeds
a plastic toy sailboat for windy days

It's pink-shirted teenagers' day up the street
Honk for Equal Love they wave

Let's flashmob the grotto at Lourdes
Let's fishnet the legs of all the girls

Amaryllis, hyacinth, every shade of rosehip
a *cross-stitched border of spruce and juniper*

Toss a few coins in the busker's cup
And buy the poet a meal

A brand new pair of running shoes
to wear on your little floating boat

Sing a silver song, carefree
and refined, stand it in a tall skinny vase

Commented [jb1]: "What pebbles to place..." is better. Immediately we understand the narrator is struggling to comprehend and put this death into perspective.

You could say something like this:

What pebbles and beads to hold
through your secular jazz memorial

in the Wing On funeral home
A row of bluets to stain the stone

I like "secular" because it changes the nature of the occasion's solemnity

Starting with a question is crucial to the energy of this poem.

Commented [jb2]: Much better than "the poet's"

Commented [jb3]: I propose keeping marble as a contrast in substance to the pebbles.

Commented [jb4]: "tiny plastic sailboat" says "toy" so I prefer what you had before.

Commented [jb5]: You have "days" in the line before. "a tiny plastic sailboat to swim out to" is a more interesting line.

Commented [jb6]: "Scoop a few coins into" is more original, more visual.

Commented [jb7]: The original ending feels stronger. What about this is as a compromise:

Why don't we add a pair of topsiders
to wear on your little floating boat. Or take

A yellow song, carefree and refined, put it on
a long stem and stand it in a tall skinny vase.

I think you need the stem reference, otherwise, it's hard to grasp that the song has become a flower or sprig of something. And yellow is better than silver because it is a floral colour. It also suggests summer or spring. Silver song makes me think of silver bells and Christmas.

FIRST REVISION

Wing On

for James Schuyler

What pebbles to place on your tomb
hold all through your jazz memorial

in the Wing On funeral home
A row of bluets to stain the stone

Just one greasy lipstick kiss on your granite
in a ruby shade called *Willing*

not smeared like Oscar Wilde's marble tomb
Set delphinium feathers and Noxzema jars

pill bottles filled with catalogue seeds
a tiny plastic boat to swim out to

It's pink-shirted teenagers' day up the street
Honk for Equal Love they wave

Let's flashmob the grotto at Lourdes
Let's fishnet the legs of all the girls

Amaryllis, hyacinth, every shade of rosehip
a *cross-stitched border of spruce and juniper*

Let's scoop a few coins into the busker's cup
And buy the poet a meal

Why don't we take a yellow song, carefree
and refined, put it on a long stem and stand it

in a skinny crystal vase? Add a pair
of topsiders to wear on the little boat

SECOND SET OF COMMENTS

Wing On

for James Schuyler

What pebbles to place on your tomb
hold all through your jazz memorial

in the secular Wing On funeral home
A row of bluets to stain the stone

Just one greasy lipstick kiss on your granite
in a ruby shade called *Willing*

not smeared like Oscar Wilde's marble tomb
Set delphinium feathers and Noxzema jars

pill bottles filled with catalogue seeds
a tiny plastic boat to swim out to

It's pink-shirted teenagers' day up the street
Honk for Equal Love they wave

Let's flashmob the grotto at Lourdes
Let's fishnet the legs of all the girls

Amaryllis, hyacinth, every shade of rosehip
a *cross-stitched border of spruce and juniper*

Let's scoop a few coins into the busker's cup
And buy the poet a meal

Why don't we take a yellow song, carefree
and refined, put it on a long stem and stand it

in a skinny crystal vase? Add a pair
of topsiders to wear on the little boat

Commented [jb8]: Here's a place where you could stick this word?

Commented [jb9]: For some reason, "let's" undercuts its use two couplets up. Makes the line feel mechanical. Why not try something like this:

A few coins scooped into the busker's cup
to the poet a meal

FINAL DRAFT, PUBLISHED IN THE MALAHAT REVIEW, SPRING 2015

Wing On

for James Schuyler

What pebbles to place on your tomb
hold all through your jazz memorial

in the Wing On funeral home
A row of bluets to stain the stone

Just one greasy lipstick kiss on your granite
in a ruby shade called *Willing*

not smeared like Oscar Wilde's marble tomb
Set delphinium feathers and Noxzema jars

pill bottles filled with catalogue seeds
a tiny plastic boat to swim out to

It's pink-shirted teenagers' day up the street
Honk for Equal Love they wave

Let's flashmob the grotto at Lourdes
Let's fishnet the legs of all the girls

Amaryllis, hyacinth, every shade of rosehip
a *cross-stitched border of spruce and juniper*

Scoop a few coins into the busker's cup
And buy the poet a meal

Why don't we take a yellow song, carefree
and refined, put it on a long stem and stand it

in a skinny crystal vase? Add a pair
of topsiders to wear on the little boat