

# The Lonely Genius

*by* Darryl Price

was washing her hands and looking  
in the mirror and hoping to  
see someone who could tell her  
the way home again. She wasn't

sure why she should want to  
go there except maybe to find  
the missing piece that had always  
eluded her. The lonely genius put

on her clothes but the old  
familiarity wasn't as comfortable as it  
had once seemed to be. Pants  
and shirt seemed to be at

odds with her somehow. The lonely  
genius panicked when she couldn't find  
her glasses but then remembered they  
were pushed on top of her

head, a habit she had picked  
up from her older sister when  
they were both in college. At  
least my shoes never let me

down, she thought. I'm too smart  
to be sad, she thought. Work  
and thinking are the not foolish  
things, she countered. So why is

there something broken and dangling inside

me now? What did I do  
to deserve this? The lonely genius  
noticed an old floppy hat sitting

slumped over some sweaters in the  
top corner of the closet before  
she had time to close the  
door. It looked sadder than she

felt. Why am I being so  
silly, she thought. What is wrong  
with me? I must be getting  
a cold, but I never get

sick. She brushed the brim off  
with a wave of her hand.  
Back in the bathroom with her  
glasses hanging onto her nose like

an exotic butterfly she pushed the  
hat down on her head. She  
smiled. She turned sideways. She glanced  
up shyly at herself and gave

a small crooked grin. This is  
stupid, she thought. Is this what  
people do, she thought. Why am  
I crying? She grabbed her keys

off of the dresser and stumbled  
down the steps. Stupid plants, she  
said to no one. Stupid kitchen  
sink. Stupid rugs. Stupid books. Stupid

coffee maker. Leave me alone, she

shouted. I just want to feel  
something else besides your company. Is  
that so wrong? No appliance dared

speaking up. The lonely genius punched  
a symbol for a number into  
her phone, her brain beginning to  
pick up speed with every second

wasted. It's me. I'm not coming  
in today. Because I don't feel  
like it, she thought. I'm not  
feeling well, she said. Yes, tomorrow. dp

Bonus poem:

Trees by Darryl Price

It all comes down to how you are able  
to move energy around. If you get  
real good at passing it there will always  
be more to come because you've made the road  
work for a living. You and the road have  
to make that magic happen between you.

It probably feels like being trapped in  
an hourglass, if you're unwilling to  
even consider talking to trees. What  
I mean is everything wants to know who  
you think you are and what are you doing.  
Sometimes the answer's simple enough: I

am you as me. You are me as you. And  
sometimes it's more complicated: I'm on a  
secret mission to save my life. Joni  
Mitchell comes on the radio. It stops  
you in your tracks. You know what she's asking:  
how can you say you don't know me? If you

know yourself, then you know me, know life is  
endlessly beautiful. Life is shit. How  
can we give each other a moment's peace  
without completely falling away into empty  
nothingness forever? I don't know, but  
I think it matters. I think it matters

to me. I've only learned lately to write a new kind of prose  
poem. The rest is still a mystery.  
My body's been through the ringer. My mind  
is still in love with music. A lovelier  
mystery. My body's been here with me  
this whole time. I have to say I like this

being with trees thing. Always have. It's a safe  
space in my own carefully crafted illusion. I know what's  
going to happen. Things will fall apart. All  
good and bad people will disappear one by  
one. Love gets pressed between the pages of  
a book on beautiful birds. But poets go on with their plays

until the end of the run. Wouldn't you know it?  
The sky is starting to cry. If I just  
quietly continue to sit here the last  
leafy tears will have washed away my first  
meaning into something less solid and realized.  
My good shoes are beginning to squeak at me and

want something more comforting than my sad  
eternal musings over nothing. I stretch my tired feet  
inside them to say all is well, don't worry, this is  
not the end flood, just another trickling  
tributary. We'll make it home before long and dry  
off together like always. Say goodbye trees. Goodbye. dp

### Tenderness by Darryl Price

I wouldn't fall apart if I could just  
remain a child and not be a stranger,  
but I have a permanent rip in my  
lost soul that none of you have ever touched  
with any special tenderness before. Wouldn't  
fall apart to take your hand once again  
and pour out my head like an hourglass of  
its useless colorless sand seconds. You could kick  
all the grains into oblivion. You  
could put your hands on your hips and laugh at

the silly glass face, stretching your uncomprehending  
grin to the bluest of skies  
beyond. But it would not kill my love for  
you. I've always seen the beautiful in  
you. I wouldn't fall apart if I saw  
you shouting with glee and eating an ice  
cream with identical ribbons streaming  
from your pretty belt into the summer  
winds like some kind of new creative flags.  
I'd silently salute you and I do.

Thank you for your service to being you.  
That's a place like home to me. One I have

forever been banished from, but I will  
defend it with every breath taken or  
left in me. I wouldn't fall apart to  
hear you sing. It's one of my fondest young  
memories. Peter Pan and I may have  
parted company as old pirates with  
no more adventures to be had in this  
sad lifetime, but our last handshake was pure

and genuine. I wouldn't fall apart  
to slip you this poem. This ticket has  
already been punched. It's no invite. The  
bell has been released from its masking tape  
tower. It really doesn't matter. I  
wouldn't fall apart. You never listen.  
I wasn't prepared. I was curious.  
I wouldn't fall apart because I had  
no choice once the room disappeared under  
my feet. My sorrow was only the first note played. dp

